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## LEGENDS



# LEGENDS

*AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES*

BY

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# I

## THE POSSESSED EXORCIST

HUNTED by the furies, I found myself finally in December 1896 fixed fast in the little university town Lund, in Sweden. A conglomeration of small houses round a cathedral, a palace-like university building and a library, forming an oasis of civilisation in the great southern Swedish plain. I must admire the refinement of cruelty which has chosen this place as my prison. The University of Lund is much prized by the natives of Schonen, but for a man from the north like myself the fact that one stays here is a sign that one has come to an inclined plane and is rolling down. Moreover, for me who am well advanced in the forties, have been a married man for twenty years and am accustomed to a regular family life, it is a humiliation to



be relegated to intercourse with students, bachelors who are given to a life of riot and carousing, and who are all more or less in ill odour with the fatherly authorities of the university because of their radical way of thinking.

*Of the same age, and formerly a companion* of the professors, who now no longer tolerate me, I am compelled to find my friends among the students, and so to take upon myself the rôle of an enemy of the seniors and of the social circles of solid respectability. Come down, indeed! That is just the right word, and why? Because I scorned to submit myself to the laws of social life and domestic slavery. I have regarded the conflict for the upholding of my personality as a sacred duty, quite irrespective of the fact of its being a good or bad one.

Excommunicated, regarded with suspicion, denounced by fathers and mothers as a corrupter of youth, I am placed in a situation which reminds one of a snake in an ant-heap, all the more as I cannot leave the town through pecuniary embarrassment.

Pecuniary embarrassment! That has now been my lot for three years, and I cannot explain how all my resources were dried up, as soon as my profits were exhausted. Four-and-twenty dramas of my composing are now laid up in a corner, and not a single one performed any more; an equal number of novels and tales, and not one in a second edition. All attempts to borrow a loan have failed and continue to fail. After I had sold all that I possessed, need compelled me at last to sell the letters which I had received in the course of years, *i.e.* other people's property.

This constant condition of poverty seems to me so clearly to depend upon some special purpose of Providence that I finally endure it willingly as a part of my penance and do not try to resist it any more. As regards myself, want of means signifies nothing to me as an independent author, but it is disgraceful not to have the wherewithal to support my children. Very well! I make up my mind to bear the disgrace though it involve pains like hell. I will not yield to the temptation to pay for false honour with my life. Pre-

pared for anything, I endure resolutely to the uttermost the most extraordinary humiliations and observe how my expiatory pangs commence. Well-educated youths of good family treat me one night to a serenade of cater-wauling in my corridor. I take it as something I have deserved without disturbing myself. I try to hire a furnished lodging. The landlord refuses with transparent excuses, and the refusal is flung in my face. I pay visits and am not received. These are mere trifles. But what really wounds me is the sublime irony shown in the unconscious behaviour of my young friends when they try to encourage me by praising my literary works, "so fruitful in liberating ideas, etc." And this to me, who have just flung these so-called ideas on the dust-heap, so that those who entertain these views are now my opponents! I am at war with my former self, and while I oppose my friends and those once of the same mind with me, I lay myself prostrate in the dust.

This is irony indeed; and as a dramatist I must admire the composition of this tragi-

comedy. In truth, the scenes are well-arranged.

Meanwhile people, taking into consideration the way in which old and new views become entangled with each other in a period of transition, do not reckon too rigidly with a veteran like myself. They do not prick up their ears so solemnly at my arguments, but rather ask after novelties in the world of ideas. I open for them the vestibule to the temple of Isis, and say, by way of preliminary, that occultism is going to be the vogue. Then they rage, and cut me down with the same weapons which during twenty years I have been forging against superstition and mysticism.

Since these debates always take place in garden-restaurants to the accompaniment of wine-drinking, one avoids violent arguments, and I confine myself to relating facts and real occurrences, assuming the mask of an enlightened sceptic. It can certainly not be said that people are opposed to everything new—quite the contrary; but they become conservative as regards ideals which have

been won by hard fighting and which one is not inclined to desert. Still less are they disposed to abjure a faith which has been purchased by a baptism of blood. It falls to my share to strike out a path between naturalism and supernaturalism, by expounding the latter as a development of the former.

For this purpose, I address myself to the problem of giving, as just indicated, a natural and scientific explanation for all the mysterious phenomena which appear to us. I split up my personality and show to the world a rationalistic occultist, but I keep my innermost individuality unimpaired and cherish the germ of a creedless religion. Often my outer rôle gets the upper hand; my two natures become so intricately intermixed that I can laugh at my newly won belief. This helps my theories to find entrance into the most oppositely constituted minds.

The gloomy December days drag on lazily under a dark-grey smoky sky. Although I have discovered Swedenborg's explanation regarding the character of my sufferings, I cannot bring myself once for all to bend

under the hand of the Powers. My disposition to make objections asserts itself, and I continually refer the real causes of my suffering to external things, especially the malice of men. Attacked day and night by "electric streams," which compress my chest and stab my heart, I quit my torture-chamber, and visit the tavern where I find friends. Fearing sobriety, I drink ceaselessly, as the only way of procuring sleep at night. Shame and disgust, however, combined with restlessness, compel me to give this up, and for some evenings I visit the Temperance Café called the "Blue Band." But the company one meets with there depresses me,—bluish, pale, and emaciated faces, terrible and malicious eyes, and a silence which is not the peace of God.

When things go wrong, wine is a benefit, and refraining from it a punishment. I return to the half-sober tavern, without, however, transgressing the bounds of moderation, after having disciplined myself for several evenings by drinking tea.

Christmas is approaching, and I regard the

children's festival with a cool bitterness that I can hardly dignify with the name of resignation. For six years I have had all kinds of sufferings, and am now prepared for anything. Loneliness in an hotel! That has long been my nightmare, and I have become accustomed to it. It seems as though the very thing that I dislike is forced upon me.

Meanwhile a closer intimacy has sprung up between me and a friendly circle, so that they begin to make confidences to me. The fact is that during the last months so many things have happened, so many unusual unexpected things. "Let me hear them," I say. "They tell me that the head of the revolutionary students, the freest of freethinkers, after having come out of a temperance hospital and taking the pledge, has been now converted, so that he forthwith——"

"Well, what?"

"Sings penitential psalms."

"Incredible!"

In fact the young man, who was unusually gifted, had for the present spoilt his prospects by attacking the views prevalent at the uni-

versity, including the misuse of strong drink. When I arrived in the town he kept a little aloof from me on the ground of his temperance principles, but it was he who lent me Swedenborg's *Arcana Cœlestia*, which he had taken from his father's library. I remember that after I had begun to read the work I gave him an account of Swedenborg's theories, and suggested to him to read the prophet in order to gain light, but he interrupted me with a gesture of alarm.

"No! I will not! Not now! Later!"

"Are you afraid?"

"Yes, for the moment."

"But read it merely as a literary curiosity."

"No."

I thought at first he was joking, but later on it became clear to me that he was quite in earnest. So there seems to be a general awakening going on through the world, and I need not conceal my own experiences.

"Tell me, old fellow, can you sleep at night?"

"Not much. When I lie awake my whole past life comes in review before me; all the



follies which I have committed, all my sufferings and unhappiness pass by, but especially the follies. And when the procession ends, it commences all over again."

"You also?"

"What do you mean by 'also'?"

"That is the disease of our time. They call it 'the mills of God.'"

At the word "God" he makes a grimace and answers, "Yes, it is a queer age we live in; the world turns round and round."

"Or rather it is the re-entrance of the Powers."

\* \* \* \*

The Christmas week is over. In consequence of the holidays my table companions are scattered over the neighbourhood of Lund. One fine morning my friend, the doctor and psychologist, comes and shows me a letter from our friend the poet, containing an invitation to his parents' house, a country property a few miles from the town. I decline to go as I dislike travelling.

"But he is unhappy," says the doctor.

"What is the matter with him?"

"Sleeplessness; you know he has lately been keeping Christmas."

I take shelter behind the excuse of having some business to do, and the question remains undecided. In the afternoon I get another letter, to say that the poet is ill and wants his friend's medical advice.

"What is he suffering from now?" I ask.

"He suffers from neurasthenia and believes himself persecuted——"

"By demons?"

"Not exactly that, but anyhow——"

An access of grim humour elicited by the fact of having a brother in misfortune makes me determine to go with him. "Very well then, let us start," I say; "you see to the medicine and I will see to the exorcism."

When the matter is settled, I pack my portmanteau, and as I go down the hotel steps I am unexpectedly accosted by an unknown female.

"Excuse me, are you Dr. Norberg?"

"No, I am not," I answer, not exactly politely, for I thought she was a disreputable person.

"Could you tell me the time?"

"No," I answer, and go on.

Trifling as this incident was, it left a disturbing impression on me. In the evening we stopped at a village in order to spend the night there. I had just gone to my room on the first floor, and put myself to rights, when the usual noise began overhead, as of furniture being dragged about and people dancing. This time I do not content myself with suspicion, but together with my companion clamber up the attic stairs in order to find confirmation of it. But we find none, since no one occupies the attic.

After a sleepless night, we continue our journey, and some hours later find ourselves in the home of the poet who here appears in the character of the mild prodigal son of honest and religious parents. We pass the day walking amid beautiful scenery and in harmless talk. The evening comes, bringing with it an indescribable peace in domestic surroundings, where the doctor and I feel ourselves quite out of place,—he, however, more than I, as he is an atheist. Late in the

evening we retire to the room which has been assigned to the doctor and myself. I look for something to read, and find the *Mediæval Magic* of Victor Rydberg. Why must it always be this author, whom I avoided while he was alive, and who persecutes me after his death? I turn the leaves, and my eye fastens on the passage dealing with Incubi. The author does not believe in them and laughs at the belief in demons. But I cannot laugh, the book excites repulsion in me, and I quiet myself with the thought that the author, if he had found himself in the society here, would have altered his views.

Meanwhile, the perusal of such weird matters is not calculated to produce sleep, and I began to feel a certain disquiet in my nerves. Accordingly, we both resolve to go and sit in a shed outside as a wholesome distraction and a hygienic preparation for the night, of which I am in fear. Provided with a lantern, we struggle over the courtyard, where the skeletons of the trees, covered with frost, creak under capricious gusts of wind.

"I believe you are afraid of shadows, my

good fellows," laughs the doctor contemptuously. We give no answer, for the violence of the wind nearly throws us down. When we reach the place which is near the stable and under the hayloft, we are greeted by a noise over our heads, and, strange to say, it is exactly the noise which has followed me for half a year.

"Listen!" I said; "don't you hear something?"

"Yes, it is only the farm servants feeding the cattle."

I do not deny the fact, but why must they do it just as I enter the place? And how comes it that the disturbance always takes an acoustic form? There must be some unseen agent who arranges these serenades for me, and it is no mere illusion of my ears, for others hear them too. When we return to our bedroom, all is still. The poet who has behaved quietly all day, and who sleeps in an attic begins to look uneasy, and finally confesses that he cannot sleep alone, as he suffers from nightmare. I give him up my bed, and go into a large room close by, where there

is an enormous one. This room, unwarmed, without blinds, and almost unfurnished, makes me feel a depression which is increased by the damp and cold. In order to distract myself, I look for books, and find on a small table a Bible illustrated by Gustave Doré, together with a number of books of devotion. Then I remember that I am an intruder into a religious home, that I, the friend of the prodigal son, am regarded as a corrupter of youth. What a humiliating rôle for a man of eight and forty !

I understand the young man's discomfort at being penned up with excellent and pious people. • He must feel like a devil obliged to attend mass. And it is to drive out devils with devils that I have been invited hither. I have come in order to make this rarefied air possible to breathe by defiling it, since the young man cannot bear it pure.

With such thoughts I retire to bed. Sleep was formerly my last and surest refuge whose pity never failed me. But now my comforter has left me in the lurch and the darkness

alarms me. The lamp is lit and there is stillness after the storm. Then a strange buzzing noise rivets my attention and rouses me from my drowsiness. I observe an insect flying hither and thither in the upper part of the room. But I am astonished to find that I cannot identify it, though I am well up in entomology, and flatter myself that I know all the winged insects in Sweden. This is not a butterfly or a moth, but a fly, long and black, which makes a sound like a wasp. I get up to chase it. Chasing flies at the end of December! It disappears. I creep again under the bedclothes and resume my meditations.

But the cursed insect flies out from under my cushion cover, and, after having rested and warmed itself in my bed, it flies in all directions, and I let it go, feeling sure that I shall soon catch it by the lamp, whose flame will attract it. I have not long to wait; as soon as the fly gets within the lamp-shade a match scorches its wings. It dances its death-dance and lies lifeless on its back. I convince myself by ocular demonstration that

it is an unknown winged insect, about an inch long, and of a black colour, with two fiery red spots on its wings.

What is it? I don't know, but in the morning I will give the others the opportunity of ratifying its existence.

Meanwhile, after accomplishing this *auto-da-fé*, I go to sleep. In the middle of the night I am awakened by a sound of whining and chattering of teeth which comes from the next room. I kindle a light and go in. My friend the doctor has thrown himself half out of bed, and writhes in terrible convulsions, with his mouth wide open. In a word, he shows all the signs of hysteria described in Charcot's treatise, which calls the stage he is in now "possession." And he a man of conspicuous intelligence and good heart, not morally worse than others, of full growth, with regular and pleasant features, now disfigured to such a degree that he looks like the picture of a mediæval devil.

In alarm, I wake him up, "Have you been dreaming, old fellow?"

"No, it was an attack of nightmare."



“Incubus!”

“Yes, indeed! It squeezed my lungs together, something like angina pectoris.”

I gave him a glass of milk; he lights a cigar, and I return to my room. But now all my chance of sleep is gone. What I had seen was too terrible, and till the morning my companions continue their conflict with the invisible.

We meet at breakfast, and make a joke of the adventures of the night. But our host does not laugh, a circumstance which I ascribe to his religious way of thinking, which makes him hold the hidden Powers in awe. The delicate position in which I find myself between the seniors whom I admire, and the juniors whom I have no right to blame, makes me hasten my departure. As we rise from table the master of the house asks the doctor for a special consultation, and they retire for half an hour.

“What is the matter with the old man?” I ask, when the doctor returns.

“He cannot sleep,—has heart attacks at night.”

"He also! That good and pious man! Then it is an epidemic which spares no one."

I will not deny that this circumstance restored my courage, and the old spirit of rebellion and scepticism took possession of my soul. To challenge the demons, to defy the invisible, and finally to subdue it,—that was the task I proposed to myself as I left this hospitable family in order to proceed upon my projected excursion in Schonen.

\* \* \* \*

Reaching the town Höganäs the same evening, I take my evening meal in the large dining-hall of the hotel, and have a journalist for my companion. As soon as we have sat down to table, the usual noise is heard overhead. In order to guard against any possibility of illusion on my part, I let the journalist describe the phenomenon, and find him convinced of its reality. As we went out after finishing our meal, the unknown woman who had accosted me before my departure from Lund, stood motionless before the door, and let me and my companion pass by. I forget the demons and the invisible,

and begin again to suspect that I am persecuted by visible foes. Terrible doubts gnaw at my brain, fever my blood, and make me feel disgusted with life.

But the night has a surprise in store for me which alarms me more than all the last days together. Tired with my journey, I go to bed at eleven o'clock. All is silent in the hotel, and no noise audible. My courage rises, and I fall into a deep sleep, but to be awoken in half an hour by a tremendous noise overhead. There seems to be at least a score of young people who sing, stamp on the ground, and push chairs about. The disturbance lasts till morning. Why don't I complain to the manager? Because never once in my life have I succeeded in obtaining justice. Being born and predestinated to suffer injustice, I have ceased to complain.

In the morning I continue my journey in order to visit the coal mines near Höganäs. At the very moment that I enter the inn, to order a carriage, the usual witches' Sabbath commences overhead. Under some pretext or other, I don't remember what, I ascend the

stairs, only to find a large empty room above. Since the mines cannot be visited before twelve o'clock, I have myself driven to a fishing village some miles north, where there is a celebrated view over the Sound. As the carriage drives through the turnpike gate before the village, I feel a violent compression of the chest, just as though someone pressed his knees into my back. The illusion is so complete that I turn round to see the enemy who is sitting behind me. Then a number of crows raise a loud croaking, and fly over the head of the horse. He is frightened, rears, pricks his ears, and large drops of sweat roll down his flanks. He champs the bit, and the driver has to get down to quiet him. I ask why the horse is so unreasonably nervous, and the answer is legible in the look which the driver directs towards the crows, who follow us for some minutes. It is a quite natural occurrence, but of an unfortunate kind, and, according to popular belief, of evil omen.

After spending two useless hours, because a fog cuts off the view over the Sound, we drive into the village Mölle. Determined to

scale the summit of the Kulle on foot, I dismiss the driver, and tell him to await my return in the inn. After my mountain walk I return to the village to look for him. But I have no knowledge of the place, and I look for some one to ask the way. Not a living soul is to be seen on the street or anywhere else. I knock at doors, but get no answer. Although it is eleven o'clock in the morning, and I am in a village of two hundred inhabitants, there is not a man, woman, child, or even a dog to be seen. Driver, horse, and carriage have disappeared. I roam about the streets, and after half an hour find the inn. Sure of finding the driver there, I order breakfast, and, after I have eaten it, ask them to send the driver to me.

“Which driver?”

“My own.”

“I haven't seen one.”

“Haven't you seen a carriage drawn by a chestnut horse, and driven by a man with a dark complexion?”

“No, indeed I have not.”

“Yet I told him to wait here in the inn.”

“Oh, then he will be sitting in the bait-house close by.”

The servant girl shows the way and I set off. But I am doomed to be unfortunate, and mistake my way, so that I cannot find the inn again. Nor is anyone to be seen. Then I get nervous, —nervous in 'broad daylight! The village is bewitched. I cannot walk any more, but stand still as if spellbound. What is the good of seeking when the devil has a finger in the pie?

After I have had a great deal of trouble the driver at last turns up. I am ashamed to tell him of my annoyances or to demand from him explanations which explain nothing. We drive back to Höganäs and when we reach the hotel the horse falls suddenly, as though someone were standing before the door who frightened it.

I now ask the way to the coal-mines, and this time, in order to make no mistake, I go the “five minutes' walk” which has been pointed out to me on foot. I walk for ten minutes, quarter of an hour, half an hour, till I come to an open plain, without a sign of buildings or chimneys to indicate the presence

of a coal-mine. The plain, which is under cultivation, seems to stretch to infinity; there is not even a hut, and no one of whom to ask the way. It is the Devil who has played me this trick! I remain standing as though fast-bound and blinded, without being able to move a step forwards or backwards. Finally I return to the village, take a room, and have a good rest on a sofa.

After quarter of an hour I am roused out of my sad thoughts by a disturbance—a sound like that of hammering nails. Incredulous as to spirit-rappings, I attribute the phenomenon to malicious people or to greater ill-luck than usual. I ring, pay my bill, and betake myself to the station.

I have three hours to wait! That is a great deal when one is impatient, but there is no help for it. After I have spent two hours on a seat, a well-dressed female figure passes me, in order to enter into the first-class waiting-room. In the gait and manner of this lady and in her whole bearing was something that aroused vague recollections in me. Anxious to see her aspect from the

front I watch the door, waiting for her reappearance. After waiting a long time I venture into the waiting-room. There is no one there at all, nor is there any other exit nor dressing-room. There are double windows, so that there is no possibility of her having gone out by them.

Do I suffer from optical delusion? Has anyone got the power to tamper with my faculty of sight? Can one make oneself invisible? These are unsolved questions which make me feel near despair. Am I mad? No, the doctors say I am not. There is inducement enough to believe in miracles. If one may believe Swedenborg, I am a damned soul in hell and the Powers punish me ceaselessly and mercilessly. The spirits which I conjure up have no wish to 'enter' the flask which I have unsealed.

I spend the evening of the same day in a good first-class hotel in the town of Malmo. At half-past ten they begin to split wood in the corridor without anyone objecting to it, and that in a continental hotel full of tourists! This is followed by dancing. Later on they



turn a machine with wheel-work. I get up, pay my reckoning, and determine to continue my journey the whole night. Absolutely alone, in the cold January night, I drag myself on, with my carpet bag, under a pitch black sky. For a moment I think the best thing would be to lie down in the snow, and die. But the next moment I collect my strength, and turn into a deserted back street where I find an unpretending hotel. After making sure that I am not watched, I slink in through the door. Without taking off my clothes I stretch myself upon the bed, firmly resolved rather to let myself be killed than obliged to get up again.

There is a death-like silence in the house, and delightful sleep approaches. Suddenly I hear a sound as though an invisible paw was scratching in the paper covering of the ceiling immediately over my head. It cannot be a mouse, for the loosely hanging paper does not move; besides, it seems to be a fairly large paw, like that of a hare, or a dog. Till the grey of morning I lie awake, expecting to feel the claws in my

flesh, but in vain, for anxiety is more painful than death.

Why do I not become ill after such tortures as these? Because I have to empty the cup of suffering to the dregs, in order that the punishments undergone may be equivalent to the wrongs committed. And it is really remarkable how I manage to endure the tortures; I swallow them down with a kind of grim joy in order to get done with them.

## II

### MY WRETCHEDNESS INCREASES

WHEN the New Year with its numerous holidays has passed, I find myself one fine day alone. It is as though a hurricane had passed by ; all are scattered, blown away, shipwrecked. My friend the doctor has entered the hospital as a patient. As a matter of fact, weakened by dipsomania, hard-pressed by poverty, and worn out by want of sleep, he is suffering from "neurasthenia." This is pitiful, and, instead of going to the tavern, I turn my steps to the hospital for an hour's conversation and society. In the café I am the only one who drinks anything alcoholic, for my three companions have taken the pledge. The poet has gone away. The young æsthete, the son of the Professor of Ethics, has been sent abroad in order to be

freed from the evil companionship of the "seducer of youth," *i.e.* myself.

A doctor of philosophy is laid up through having broken his leg. At the same time it happens that the young chemist, the standard-bearer of the party of progress, falls ill and has to be treated for neurasthenia. He suffers from sleeplessness, attacks of nightmare and giddiness. All these sad events and others happen in the course of a month and a half. And what makes my situation insupportable is, that they attribute the blame more or less to me. I am the Evil One himself and have the evil eye! It is a good thing that they know nothing about the power of an evil will and the secret tricks of occultism and reject all ideas of it, otherwise they would kill me.

A depressing stagnation has settled down on the intellectual life of the University. There are no new productive ideas, no ferment and no movement. The natural sciences have suffered to fall into disuse the transformistic method which promised progress, and threaten to die of their common weakness. There is no more discussion, for people are agreed as to

the futility of all efforts at reform. They have seen so many illusions perish, and in this condition of things the once great movement for liberty has dissolved or rather decomposed.

The younger generation are waiting for something new without being clear as to what they want. Novelty at any price, whatever it be, with the exception of apologies and retreats! Forward to the unknown, no matter what, so long as it is not old! They want reconciliation with the gods, but they must be re-created or, rather, developed gods, who are up-to-date, have broad views, are free from petty prejudices, and intoxicated with the joy of life. The invisible powers have become all the more morose, envious of the freedom which mortals have won for themselves. Wine is poisoned, and causes madness instead of calling up pleasant visions. Love, regulated by social bonds, proves to be a life-and-death battle, and free love brings in its train nameless and numberless diseases, causes misery in homes, and its victims are execrated and outlawed. The period for experiments has passed away, and the experiments have produced only

negative results. All the better for the men of the future who can derive wholesome lessons from the defeat of the advance guard, who have gone astray in the desert, and fallen in hopeless strife against superior force.

\* \* \* \*

Lonely as I am, a wreck on a reef in the ocean, there are moments when I am seized with giddiness at the sight of the blue and vacant immensity. Is it the sky which reflects the outspread sea, or the sea which mirrors the sky? I have fled from men and men fly from me. In the loneliness which I longed for I am persecuted by a crowd of demons, and after all I begin to prefer the humblest mortal to the most interesting phantom. But when I look for a man, during the long evenings through the whole town, I find no one either at home or in the cafés.

But in the midst of my fated and inevitable need, Providence sends in my way a man, whose father I had in former times despised, both on account of his defective education as of his radical views, which had shut him out from the best social circles. Now came the

recompense; I had rejected the father, although he was a rich man, and I was simply compelled to put up with the son. It must be added that the young man had as bad a name in the town as myself, and was doomed to equal isolation as a "seducer of youth." Our common misfortune causes us to form a real friendship. He invites me to share his house, he provides me with means of living, he watches over me as over a patient, and, as a matter of fact, the persecution to which I have been subjected has made me cause a scandal in my hotel, where I tried to get into a room near my own, convinced that I would find the disturbers of my peace there. If I had stayed another day in that hotel the police would certainly have interfered, and I should have spent the rest of my days in a madhouse.

At the same time the appearance of another young man convinces me that the gods do not cherish an irreconcilable grudge against me. He was a real youthful prodigy, with a precocious insight into all branches of human knowledge. His father, a learned man of

high moral character, had brought him up well, but two years ago the young man was seized with a mysterious illness, the details of which he told me, with a view of learning my opinion, or rather of confirming his own suspicions.

The young man, who had led a pure life and imbibed the strictest moral principles, entered the world with favourable auspices, admired by his contemporaries and popular wherever he came. But one day he committed an act directly forbidden by his conscience. Since then nothing could give him peace. After a long period of mental torture his body also succumbed, while his spiritual crisis was intensified. Every day he realised the fresh advance of an imaginary disease, and at last he seemed to undergo death agonies. Then he thought he really was dead, and heard in all corners of the house the hammering of coffins. When he read the paper, for his mind remained clear, he expected to see the report of his own burial. At the same time his body seemed to suffer dissolution and exhaled a corpse-like



odour, which frightened the attendants away from his bed, and alarmed him himself. Moreover a change seemed to take place even in his personality, for though he was formerly religiously minded in his way he was now attacked by doubts. One of his illusions, which he remembered afterwards, was that his attendants had wax-like or blue faces. And even when he rose from his bed to watch the people in the street all the passers-by seemed to him to have blue faces. What still further alarmed him was that, in the street below, there seemed to be passing an endless procession of beggars, ragged vagabonds, decrepit, limping, legless cripples on crutches, as though they had been summoned to pass in review before him. During the whole time the sick man had the impression that what he saw was, beyond all doubt, real, and yet he was obliged to attribute a symbolical meaning to it. Every book which he opened seemed to contain direct intimations for him. After he had ended his narrative he asked what I thought of the matter.

“Something half real,” I answered, “a

series of visions conjured up by someone with a special object. A living charade, from which it is for you to draw the lesson. How were you cured?"

"It is comical, but I will confess it to you. Formerly I had stood in opposition against my parents, who had surrounded me with unwearied care for soul and body, but now at last I brought my neck under the yoke, which had become pleasant and beneficial to me, since it had been imposed in pure love, and so I was healed."

"And have you had no relapse?"

"Yes, once, but of a very mild kind. A period of insignificant nervousness and sleeplessness, which yielded to the simplest medical instructions. But this time I had nothing to reproach myself with."

"And what were your doctor's orders?"

"To live regularly, to sleep at night, and to keep free of excesses."

"Why, that is the way of the Cross."

\* \* \* \*

Thus I feel no longer lonely and deserted. The young scholar seems to have come to me

as a messenger from the Powers; I can confide all to him, and while we compare our experiences, we lend each other mutual support on the narrow path in the valley of suffering. He also has been struck in his youth, and all men are violently roused from sleep! There is a universal awakening proceeding, and what is to be its goal?

### III

#### MY WRETCHEDNESS INCREASES

SWEDENBORG, my guide in the darkness, has finally revealed himself as an avenger. His *Arcana Cœlestia* speaks only of hell and of punishments which are executed by evil spirits, *i.e.* devils. Not a word of comfort or grace. And yet, while I was still young, the Devil had been got rid of; everyone laughed at him, and now, by the irony of accident, they are just preparing to keep the jubilee of the philosopher Boström, who did away with hell and annihilated the Devil. In my youth this thinker was regarded as a reformer, and now the Devil is preparing a renaissance for himself. He has crept into the productions of the so-called Satanic literature, into the fine arts by the side of Christ, and even into

trade. Last Christmas I noticed that the Christmas presents were adorned with little devils and goblins, both the children's toys and comic objects which elder people buy for each other, such as spice cakes and almanacks. Is there really a devil, or is he only a half-real bugbear projected from the unseen in order to make a strong impression on us, and to drive us to the Cross? I had not yet succeeded in finding an answer to this question, when, one cold, wet evening my friends took me to a sculptor, who is a freethinker and atheist, as are the other members of the theosophical society to which he belongs. He has a private collection of clay ornaments on view intended for the Stockholm Exhibition. In these, with repulsive realism and cynicism, the Devil is represented in different attitudes, and always with a priest who is terrified at him. People laugh at them, but I cannot laugh, and think to myself "Wait, and we shall see!" After an interval of four months I meet the sculptor in the street. He looks troubled, as though some misfortune had

happened to him. "Can you imagine," he says, "such a piece of infernal bad luck? They have just broken three of my best figures in unpacking them at the Exhibition." I feel immensely interested, and simultaneously with my condolence over his misfortune I ask with almost shameless curiosity, "And which of your statuettes were they?"

"Three of the Devil, I believe."

I do not laugh, but answer with a smile, "There, you see!" Lucifer does not like to be caricatured."

Some weeks later the sculptor receives another letter, and learns that the other figures have fallen from their pedestals and been broken, without the managers being able to say how it has happened. Consequently the unfortunate artist has lost a year, not counting the costs of production, and he finds himself struck out of the list of exhibitors. In his despondency he comforts himself by attributing it to accident, which means nothing, and yet which saves a man's pride, while bowing to blind Chance. One

stoops one's head before a stone flung at one, but what of the flinger whom one is not conscious of having seen?

\* \* \* \*

Meanwhile I obtain Swedenborg's works, one after another, and always at some favourable moment. In his "Dreams" I find all the symptoms of my illness, the nightly attacks and the difficulty in breathing. The facts which he records in these notes belong to the time before he had his revelations. That was for Swedenborg the period of "desolation," when he was delivered over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh. This helps me to understand the beneficent purposes of the invisible powers, without, however, bringing me comfort. Not till I read *Heaven and Hell* do I begin to get help. There is, then, an object in these mysterious sufferings—the improvement and development of my personality to something greater, something like Nietzsche's imaginary ideal, but differently conceived.

The Devil is not an independent being, equal to God, and His opponent. The invis-

ible power which plagues us is the Spirit of discipline. A great step is taken when we see that evil does not exist for evil's sake, and we conceive a new hope of finding peace through penitence and conscientious watchfulness over our thoughts and actions. As I watch the events of daily life, a new method of education begins to operate upon me, and I learn to recognise the system of signs which the invisible powers use. But my difficulties are great because of my age and the inveteracy of evil habits, and in consequence of a certain yieldingness of disposition I am all too prone to suit myself to my surroundings. It is so hard to be the first to quit a merry carouse; if I try to insist on my own way, my intimate friends call me "a bad boon-companion." But one has to learn to do everything in this world.

For instance, at dinner, which I take at two o'clock, I had been accustomed to remain behind for coffee. One day at the beginning of February I am sitting there with my back against the outer wall, when my friends begin to discuss whether they shall order a bowl



of punch. Instantly there comes a direct answer in the form of a terrible noise behind my back, so that the cups of coffee on the tray jump. It can be imagined what kind of a face I make. The cause of the noise is quite simple,—a workman is repairing the decoration of the wall outside.\*

We adjourn to a special room. Immediately there breaks out a noise on the ceiling over my head. I rise and fly from the battle-field, and from that hour I never remain for coffee after dinner except on holidays. In the evening, on the other hand, I can drink a glass with my friends, since the object is not so much drink as the interchange of thought with learned people, who represent all branches of science. But, often it happens that, mere love of drink gets the upper hand, accompanied by unbridled hilarity and cynical suggestions. One's lower nature breaks through and the brutal instincts find free scope. It is so pleasant to be an animal for a while, one thinks to oneself, and besides life is not always so cheerful, and so on, to the same effect. One day, after I have for some time

taken part in riotous drinking bouts, I am on the way to my restaurant. I pass by an undertaker's shop where a coffin is exposed to view. The street is strewn with fir branches, and the great bell of the cathedral is tolling a knell. Arrived at the restaurant, I find my table companion in trouble, as he has come straight from the hospital, where he has taken leave of a dying friend. As I return home after dinner by back streets, where I have not been before, I meet two funeral processions. How everything reeks of death to-day, and the tolling of the knell recommences !

In the evening, as I am about to enter the tavern, I see an old man leaning against the wall, obviously drunk and ill. In order not to meet him, I make a detour and enter the dining-hall. My headache from yesterday's debauch, combined with the funereal impressions I have received in the course of the day, inspire me with a secret fear of alcohol, so that I order milk for my supper.

In the midst of the meal there is a noise in the house mingled with cries of grief, and after a little while they carry in the old man

I had seen near the entrance, his son leading the procession. His father was dead. A warning for drinkers!

In the night following I had a terrible attack of nightmare. Some one hung fast on to my back and shook me by the shoulders. This was sufficient cause for me to be careful how I prolonged my drinking to a late hour. But I did not entirely renounce it. At the end of January I take rooms in a private house, and confront my fate steadfastly without seeking to find distraction in the presence of a friend. It is a duel, and there is no possibility of escape. As soon as I come home in the evening I ascertain at once how it stands with my conscience. A choking atmosphere, even when the windows are open, gives warning of a bad night. The terrible fear I feel brings on fever accompanied with a cold sweat, and when I search my conscience I at once find where the shoe pinches. But I fly no more, for it is useless.

\* \* \* \*

Among the lessons which the avenging powers have given me is one which I dare

not forget, that is, the command not to search into hidden things, because they are to remain hidden.

For instance, in my excursions in Schonen, I had noticed a kind of stones found in scattered places of peculiar and very characteristic shapes. They represented either types of living creatures, such as birds, or hats and helmets. There were also others with furrows which resembled the tracings on meteoric stones. Without being clear as to their origin, I received the impression that they were not a mere freak of nature. Their form showed that they were works of art, produced and elaborated by human hands. For two years I continued to look for them, and after I had interested a friend of mine who lived at a distance in the matter, I told him where some could be found, that he might send me a photograph of them. But the expedition failed, and a year later I discovered that I had given him a wrong address. Ever since then, when I have obstinately set about such investigations, hindrances have arisen in such an extra-

ordinary way that I could not attribute them to chance.

Thus, for instance, I had resolved one morning to make an expedition with an antiquarian in order to solve the question once for all. In the street before my door a nail came loose in my boot and stuck in my foot. At first I took no notice of it, but as I approached my friend's door the pain became so great that I had to stand still. It was impossible to proceed, or to turn back. In great annoyance I drew off my boot and flattened the nail with my knife. A vague remembrance of a passage I had read in Swedenborg came to me simultaneously—"When the avenging spirits see an evil act, or the intention to commit a wrong, they punish by inflicting pain in the foot, the hand, or the neighbourhood of the diaphragm." But I was so spurred on by the thirst for knowledge, which I regarded as lawful and praiseworthy, that I resumed my interrupted attempt, and soon joined my companion. We intended first to investigate a grotto in the park. But the entrance was blocked up

with heaps of abominable filth piled up in such a challenging or rather ironical way as to make me smile. The other place, well known to me, where these stones are to be found, is in a garden, where great blocks of them are grouped round a tree, and they are easily got at. But this morning the gardener has fenced off the tree and the antiquities with a row of flower-pots, so that I cannot get there to show my learned companion anything. A pretty fiasco! Irritated by all these hindrances, I take my friend, who begins to look sceptical, right through the town to a courtyard where a whole museum of these curiosities has been collected. There the matter will be settled once for all, and I expect to see him startled. On our arrival we are greeted by the barking of a vile cur; as we endeavour to drive him off, the occupants of the house come into the courtyard, and we have to shout what we want in order to drown the noise of the barking dog. The objects of our search are surrounded by a closed fence, and the key cannot be found.

•

"Are there any other places?" asks the antiquarian, who begins to despise me.

"Yes, there are, but outside the town."

I will not weary the reader with trifles. Suffice it to say, that after more or less vexatious wanderings, we did at last reach a pile of such stones. But there was witchcraft at work; I could show the antiquarian nothing, because he saw nothing, and I myself, as though dazzled, could not now distinguish in the shapes of the stones anything resembling living creatures. But on the next day, when I went to the place alone, I found a whole menagerie.

The account of this adventure may close with a note regarding the character of these remains of pre-Adamite sculpture. The occultists attribute their origin to men of the Tertiary period, and place them in the same category as the colossal stone image found in the Easter Islands and in the desert of Gobi. Olaus Magnus mentions them also, and has found them in great numbers on the coast of Braviken in East Gothland. Swedenborg attributes to them a symbolical significance,

and regards them as artistic products of the silver age.

\* \* \* \*

To judge by what takes place in the narrow circle in which I live, the Powers do not allow me to chose my acquaintances, and still less to despise any one, whoever it may be. Like everyone else, I have sympathies and partialities for certain kinds of people. At present I seek for those seriously disposed, to whom I can impart my thoughts without being exposed to unpleasant and insulting jests. Providence has sent me a friend whom I prize highly on account of the pure atmosphere which surrounds him. Like a spoilt child I begin to depise the other uncultivated and uninspired souls, who occasionally find pleasure in coarseness.

But just as I return, I found my friend has gone away. I cannot meet the others anywhere, and in my isolation I am compelled to humble myself to the utmost by begging for the society of insignificant persons, who, as a rule, have nothing to do with the society in which I move. After a number of



experiences in this direction I make my old discovery again, that the difference between man and man is not so great as one supposes. As a matter of fact I have found real gentlemen among the lower classes, and how many saints and heroes may I not have unconsciously classed with those I despised! On the other hand, people lay stress on the proverb, "Evil companionship corrupts good manners"; but which is evil society, and which is the good? It might be supposed, as I have done, that a mission to preach was laid upon me, if I settled down in a strange town, without knowing why, but what is my business *here*? To preach morality? My conscience answers me "Yes; by thy example." But now no one takes me for an example, and what would be the use if I tried to preach to young men who have not sinned as much as I have?

Besides, the period of the prophets seems to have come to an end. The Powers want to have nothing more to do with priests, but have taken the direct government of souls upon themselves, and one need not go far to find examples of this.

One of our poets has recently been summoned before a court because of a collection of poems, some of which were considered injurious to morality. He has been acquitted by the jury, but can find no rest. In one of his poems he has challenged the Eternal to a wrestle, even though (he said) it should have to be decided in hell. It seems as though the challenge had been accepted, and the young man were compelled, like a broken reed, to sue for mercy. One evening, while he sits in a merry circle of friends, some power, unknown to the exact sciences, snatches the cigar from his mouth so that it falls to the ground. A little surprised, he picks up the cigar again, as though nothing had happened. But the same thing happens three times. Then the sceptic becomes as pale as death, and quits the place in silence, while his friends sit mute with astonishment.

But when he reached home the rash man found a new surprise awaiting him. Without any visible cause, both his hands like those of a masseur began to chafe or rather to

knead his whole body, which too much drinking had made unnecessarily obese. This involuntary massage continued without interruption for fourteen days, yet at the end of this time the wrestler feels himself sufficiently strengthened to enter the arena again. He hires an hotel and invites his friends to a Belshazzar's feast, which is to last three days. He means to show the world how Nietzsche's superman can control the evil spirit of wine. They drink through the whole of the first day till night falls, and with it falls the champion. But before he gives up the battle for lost the demons of wine take possession of the soul of this superman, and fill him with such uncontrollable madness that he flings his guests out of the doors and windows, and so the feast ends. Whereupon the host is taken to an asylum.

Thus the adventure was related to me, and I am sorry to have repeated it without the tears which one owes to misfortune. But the accused has gained a defender for his case, a young doctor, who offers to assist him in his conflict with the Eternal. Is it rash to

connect these two facts? The doctor pleads the blasphemer's cause, and the doctor breaks his leg. Was it a mere chance that frightened his horse so that he shied and upset the carriage? I only ask the question. And how did it happen that the doctor, after he had been confined to his bed for several months, got up with a "sprung thigh sinew," that his formerly clear and firm look had a strange and wild expression, like that of a man who is no longer master of himself?

Is it necessary for me to answer? In case one should say "Yes," I continue the narrative to the end. This doctor, a good fellow, intelligent and honest, came to me one day towards the end of summer, and confided to me that he was plagued with sleeplessness, and that a strange irritation woke him at night, and allowed him no rest till he got up. If he obstinately remained lying in bed he began to have palpitations.

"Well?" he concluded, awaiting my answer with manifest impatience.

"It was just the same with me," I replied.

"And how did you get cured?"

Was it cowardice, or did I obey an inner voice when I answered, "I took sulphonal."

His face assumed an expression of disappointment, but I could do nothing for him

## IV

### MIRACLES

AFTER three months of very severe winter weather, the first signs of spring begin to be visible. One's frozen senses begin to thaw, and the seeds sown under the snow begin to germinate. So much has happened, and instead of rejecting undeniable facts as fortuitous coincidences, I observe and collect them, and draw my inferences. At first I laugh at my own superstition, but later on I cease to smile, and do not know what to believe. Miracles happen, and that every day, but they do not happen to order.

One day before noon I cross the market place, which is empty for the moment. As I have long suffered from "agoraphobia," I dread empty spaces, and cross it with scarcely concealed anxiety. Just now, when I am

tired by work, and extremely nervous, the aspect of the deserted market place makes a very painful impression on me, so that I experience a desire to make myself invisible in order to escape curious eyes. I lower my head, fasten my eyes on the pavement, and feel as though I had compressed myself within myself, closed my senses, cut off communication with the outer world, and ceased to feel the influence of my surroundings. Almost unconsciously I have crossed over the market place. The next moment in the street two well-known voices call after me. I remain standing.

“Which way did you come?”

“Over the market place.”

“No! How could you? We stood waiting here to meet you and to have dinner together.”

“I assure you——”

“Oh; then you made yourself invisible?”

“Nothing is impossible.”

“For you, at any rate. They tell the most incredible stories about you.”

“I suspected something of the kind, as I

have been seen near the Danube, when I was in Paris."

This, was really the case, but at this time I believed there were visions without any substratum of reality, and I let drop the remark, merely as a happy idea.

The same day I take my evening meal alone, in the smaller dining-room of the inn. A man, whom I do not know, comes in, apparently to look for some one. He does not seem to notice me although he looks at all the tables, and, believing himself alone in the room, he begins to swear and talk aloud with himself. In order to apprise him of the presence of some one I knock with my fork against a glass. The stranger starts and seems surprised to see some one; he becomes suddenly silent, and hastens away.

" From that time I begin to ponder the subject of dematerialisation which the occultists believe in. And proofs follow rapidly. A week later, my attention was aroused by another strange occurrence. It was a Wednesday, when the dining-room of the inn is generally full because of the weekly market.



In order to avoid the crowd and the discomfort, my usual table companion has ordered a special room, and, as he has come earlier than myself, he waits for me in the hall, and bids me go upstairs. But in order to save time, we agree to engage the tea-table in the dining-room. Unwillingly I march in behind my friend, because I abominate the drunken farmers and their bad language. Meanwhile we come through the crowd to the tea-table, where there was only one very quiet individual. After we had taken something without exchanging a single word, we retired to our private room, I following him. When we reached the door, my friend seemed astonished to see me.

“Hullo! Where did you come from?”

“From the tea-table, of course.”

“I never saw you; I thought you had” remained up here.”

“Never saw me! Why, our hands crossed over the dishes. Can I then make myself invisible?”

“Well, it is funny anyhow.”

When I delve in my memory, I bring now

forgotten incidents to light, which were hitherto valueless to a sceptic whose mind had been sterilised by the study of the exact sciences. Thus I remember the morning of my first wedding day. It was a winter Sunday, peculiarly quiet and unnaturally solemn for me who was preparing to quit an impure bachelor life and to settle down by the domestic hearth with the woman I loved. I felt I should like to take my breakfast, the last in my bachelor life, quite alone, and with this object I went down to an underground café in a low street. It was a basement-room lit with gas. After ordering breakfast, I noticed that I was being watched by a number of men who were sitting, obviously in a state of intoxication, round their bottles, since the previous evening. They looked spectrally pale, uncouth, shabby; they were hoarse-voiced and disgusting, after a night spent in debauchery. Among the company I recognised two friends of my youth, who had so come down in the world that they had neither house nor home nor occupation, notorious good-for-nothings, not far from committing some crime.

It was not pride which made me shrink from renewing the acquaintanceship ; it was the fear of a relapse in the mire, the dislike of finding myself placed back in my past,—for I had gone through a similar stage. At last, when the comparatively soberest of them, chosen as an envoy, stood up in order to approach my table, I was seized with terror. Firmly resolved to deny my identity if necessary, I fix my eyes on my assailant, and without my knowing how it happened he remained standing for a moment before my table, and then with a silly expression, which I can never forget, he makes an apology and returns to his place. He had been prepared to swear that it was I, and yet he did not recognise me.

Then they began to discuss my *alibi*.

“It is he certainly.”

“Yes, the Devil take me, it is!”

I quit the place filled with shame at myself and pity for the poor fellows, but in the depth of my heart glad at having escaped such a hateful existence.

Escaped !

Apart from the moral aspect of the question the strange fact remains, that one can so alter one's physiognomy as to be irreconisable by an old acquaintance whom one meets and salutes all through the year in the street.

\* \* \* \*

In earlier times I used to go hunting alone, without a dog and often without a rifle. I wandered about at haphazard (it was in Denmark), and once as I was standing in a glade a fox jumped up suddenly beside me. He looked me in the face, in full sunlight, at a distance of about twenty steps. I stood motionless, and the fox continued to search the ground hunting for mice. I stooped to pick up a stone. Then it was his turn to make himself invisible, for he vanished in an instant without my seeing how he did so. When I searched the ground, I found there no trace of a fox-hole, and not even a bush behind which he might have hidden. He had vanished without the help of his legs.

Here and there in the marshy meadows on the banks of the Danube herons often build their nests, and they are extremely shy birds.

In spite of that, I could often surprise them without hiding myself. As long as I kept motionless, I could stand and watch them. Sometimes they even flew close over my head. No one would believe me when I related this, least of all sportsmen, and I concluded therefore that the matter was something above the ordinary.

When I told this to my friend the theosophist in Lund, he remembered an occurrence to which he could never find the key. A workman whom he knew visited him, saying that he had found an antique work of art for sale, and asked him for an advance of five crowns. After the man had received the commission to buy it he had disappeared, and could be found nowhere for three whole months. One Sunday evening the theosophist and his wife were going down a back street, when he saw the man a little before him on the same pavement. "Now I have the fellow!" he exclaimed. He let go of his wife's arm, and hastened his steps, when suddenly the other disappeared, as if he had evaporated. As usual in such cases, the

theosophist believed he was the victim of a delusion. At the same time there was no one else in the street, so that the possibility of a mistaken identity was excluded.

Such is the bare fact. To explain the inexplicable is a contradiction in terms. There was there no open door nor window nor cellar hole into which the man might have slipped and hidden himself. When it is said that some human beings have the power to divert the visible light-rays from their proper direction, that is to say, to alter the quantity of refraction,—does this heap of words explain the problem, the stress of which lies in the *Why* and the *Wherefore*?

The only supposition left is, that it was a miracle! Let it pass for such until we obtain further information, and, while we wait, let us collect data, and not attempt to refute them.

## V

### MY INCREDULOUS FRIEND'S TROUBLES

I FEEL greatly embarrassed in narrating my friend's adventure, but I have begged his pardon beforehand, and he knows how unselfish my aims are. Besides, as he has related his troubles to everyone who would listen to them, without having deposed to the facts under a seal of secrecy, I have only to play the rôle of an impartial chronicler, and if I am looked at askance on account of that it is I who pay the penalty.

My friend is an atheist and materialist, but enjoys the life which he despises, and fears death, which he does not know. At the beginning of our acquaintanceship, when he offered me a refuge in his house, he treated me with friendly brotherliness, and tended me like a sick person, that is to say, with the

considerate sympathy of an intelligent free-thinker who understands mental disorders, and the indulgent treatment which they require.

But even a freethinker may have his dark hours of depression, the cause of which he knows not. Late one evening, when the room was in twilight, and the lamps, though kindled, did not illuminate the corners where the shadows fell, my friend confided to me, in answer to my expressions of gratitude, that the obligation lay on his side. For he had, he said, a short while ago lost his best friend by death. Since then he was troubled by uneasy dreams, in which there always mixed the image of his departed friend.

“You also?” I exclaimed.

“I also! But you understand that I am only speaking of dreams such as one has at night.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“Sleeplessness, nightmares, and so forth. You know what it is to be ridden by a nightmare, which is a disorder of the chest



caused by disturbed digestion following on excesses. Have you never had it?"

"Yes, indeed. One eats crabs for supper, and then one has it! Have you tried sulphonal for it?"

"Yes. But as to trusting doctors—you know yourself already, perhaps?"

"I should think so! I know them thoroughly. But let us speak of your dead friend. Does he appear to you, in a disturbing way,—I mean in dreams?"

"I need hardly tell you it isn't he who appears before me. It is his corpse, and I am sorry to say he died under strange circumstances. Only think! A young talented man who had made a very promising début in literature must die of an obscure disease, tuberculosis miliaris, which caused his body to so decompose that it looked like a heap of millet."

"And now his body appears to you?"

"You don't understand what I mean. Let us drop the subject."

\* \* \* \*

With his health shaken and his moods as

varying as April weather, my friend seems to suffer from an acute degree of nervousness. When I part from him in February, he will never go alone to his house after sunset.

Then he has an important pecuniary loss. There is some talk of instituting legal proceedings, and we fear that he may commit suicide, judging by expressions which he has let fall from time to time. Although recently engaged to be married, he regards the future in the most gloomy light. But instead of resisting his troubles, he takes a journey in order to distract his mind, and on his return invites his friends to a dinner to celebrate the occasion. But in the middle of the festival he has an attack of indisposition and is ordered to bed.

As soon as I hear of it, on the second day of his illness, I go to him. A corpse-like odour pervades the house. The patient has grown black in the face, so that he can be scarcely recognised. He lies stretched out on the bed, and is watched by a friend and a nurse, whose hands he does not let go of for a moment. My coming startles him,

weakened as he is by his continuous sufferings.

Later on, when he is somewhat better, he tells me that he has had a vision of five devils in the shape of red apes with black eyes, which crept up, sat on the edge of his bed, and moved their tails up and down.

When he has recovered his strength and put his pecuniary affairs in order, he tells his dream to every one who will listen, and they are much amused at it.

From time to time he expresses his astonishment that destiny, which has hitherto favoured him, now begins to persecute him so that nothing will succeed and everything goes wrong. Amid these gloomy reflections, with intervals of cheerfulness, the unhappy man, who seems to have fallen into disfavour with the Powers, receives a fresh and crushing blow. A tradesman, who belonged to his set, has drowned himself, leaving debts, so that my friend who had gone surety for him for a considerable sum is still further embarrassed.

His troubles now recommence in earnest. The body of the dead man appears in his

kitchen, and he persuades a young doctor to pass the nights with him in order to drive away the phantoms. But the invisible powers are regardless of everything, and one night my friend wakes up to see the whole room full of mice. Fully convinced of their reality, he takes a stick and strikes at them till they disappear. That was an attack of delirium, but an attack shared by two, for in the morning his friend, who occupied the adjoining room, says that he *heard* the squeaking of mice from my friend's room. How are we to explain a hallucination which is seen by one and heard by another?

When this adventure is related in sunshine and broad daylight, it is laughed at. Thereupon my friend begins to give a detailed description of the body of the suicide which had appeared to him, and he accompanies it with deliberately cynical remarks, "Cannot you imagine that it was quite black, and that the white maggots——"

As an eye-witness, I can testify that in the same moment that he uttered these words he turned pale, stood up from the table, and

with a gesture of disgust pointed to something on his plate. It was a white maggot crawling along a sardine.

The next day my friend is obliged to break off his evening meal because he finds a piece of chicken surrounded by white maggots. He cannot eat although he is ravenously hungry, and becomes alarmed, but only for a moment.

"What does it mean? What does it mean?" he says.

"One should not speak ill of the dead. They revenge themselves."

"The dead? But they are dead!"

"Exactly. And therefore they are more alive than the living."

My friend had, as a matter of fact, accustomed himself to speak openly of the weaknesses of the deceased, who, in spite of all, had been a good friend to him.

Some days later, as we sat at table in the verandah of a garden-restaurant, one of the guests exclaimed, "Look at that rat! What a big fellow!"

No one had seen it, and they laughed at the visionary.

"Wait a minute!" he said, "you will soon see. It is there under the planks!"

A minute passed, and a cat came from under the planks. "I think we have had enough of rats," my friend exclaimed, apparently much disturbed.

After some time has elapsed, one evening I hear a knock at my door after I have gone to bed. I open it, and find myself face to face with my friend, who looks disturbed and excited. He asks to be allowed to stay and rest on a sofa, because there is a woman who screams the whole night in the house where he lives.

"Is it a real woman, or a spectre?"

"Oh, it is a woman with cancer, who only wants to be able to die. It is enough to drive one mad. If I don't end my days in an asylum, it will be strange."

There is only a short sofa, and to see the tall man stretched out on such a thing, and two chairs placed by it, is as though one saw a slave on the rack. Hunted out of his pleasant house, and his comfortable bed, deprived of the simple pleasure of being able

to undress himself, he rouses my sympathy and I offer him my bed as a sign of my gratitude. But he refuses. He asks to have the lamp lit, and the light falls straight on the unfortunate man's face. He fears the dark and I promise to sit up and watch. He lies and murmurs to himself till sleep has pity on him. "There is no doubt it is a sick woman, but still it is strange."

For two whole weeks he is obliged to seek rest on other people's sofas. "This is really hell!" he exclaims.

"Just what I think" is my answer.

Another time when the "white woman" has appeared to him in the night he himself suggests the possibility that it may be a punishment. True to my rôle, I confine myself to a sceptical silence. I pass over others of his adventures and come to the story of the Madonna and the telepathic vision he had of some one at the moment he died. It is quite short. On the occasion of an excursion into the country my friend found himself in a little company gathered on the shore of a lake. In an access of cheer-

fulness and forgetfulness of his painful experiences he made the following suggestion,—

“This, on my faith, is the proper scene for a revelation of the Blessed Virgin! It would be a good speculation to set up a shrine for pilgrimages.”

At the same moment he turned pale, and to the great astonishment of his companions he exclaimed almost in an ecstasy,—

“Just now he has died.”

“Who?”

“Lieutenant X. I saw him lying in the death struggle, the chamber, the attendants, and everything!”

His friends laughed at him. but on their return to the town they were met by the news of Lieutenant X.’s death. It had happened suddenly, exactly at half-past seven o’clock, at the same moment in which the visionary received intimation of it. Those who had ridiculed him were greatly impressed, so that they involuntarily shed tears, not of grief, for the death of the lieutenant was a matter of indifference to them, but of emotion at the strange occurrence.



The newspapers made a fuss over the affair. The honest ones did not deny the fact, while the dishonest ones suggested that the witnesses were liars. The result was a protest on the part of my friend the heretic, who acknowledged the real facts of the case, but explained them as an accidental coincidence.

I grant that a certain apparent modesty would rule out as impossible all interference of invisible powers in our petty affairs, but this modesty itself may be an "obstacle cast up by the unrepentant." This seems to be suggested by the following words of Claude de Saint Martin:—

"It is perhaps this wrong connection of ideas (that the earth is only a mere point in the universe) which has led men to the still falser notion that they are not worthy of the Creator's regard. They have believed themselves to be obeying the dictates of humility when they have denied that the earth and all that the universe contains only exist on man's account, on the ground that the admission of such an idea would be only

conceit. But they have not been afraid of the laziness and cowardice which are the inevitable results of this affected modesty. The present-day avoidance of the belief that we are the highest in the universe is the reason that we have not the courage to work in order to justify that title, that the duties springing from it seem too laborious, and that we would rather abdicate our position and our rights than realise them in all their consequences. Where is the pilot that will guide us between these hidden reefs of conceit and false humility?"

Meanwhile I have gained a thorough knowledge of all my friend's weaknesses, and can predict the troubles he will suffer by day or night by observing his behaviour. My observations lead me to the conclusion that all his ailments spring from "moral" grounds. But "moral" is a word which is nowadays despised and suspected, and I am not the man to reassert it. Only on one occasion, when the unfortunate man was in a state of deep depression, I said to him out of sympathy, and by way of putting up a sign-post for him, "If you

had read Swedenborg before your last attack at night you would have gone into the Salvation Army or become a hospital attendant ! ”

“ How so ? ” he asked. “ What does this Swedenborg say ? ”

“ He says a great deal, and he it is who has saved me from going mad. Consider now, he has given me back the power of sleep by a single sentence of four words.”

“ Say it, I beg you.”

My courage sank, and has failed me every time that the possessed man has asked for this formula of exorcism.

But here I write down the four words which are worth all the doctors’ regulations, “ *Do this no more.* ”

Everyone’s conscience must interpret the word “ this ” for himself. I, the undersigned, declare that I have obtained health and quiet sleep by obeying the above receipt.

THE AUTHOR.

This is a confession, not an exhortation.

## VI

### MISCELLANIES

NO one has been so tried by fate as the doctor of whom I spoke in the first chapter under the sobriquet of leader of the youthful revolvers. After countless changes of opinion he has become sober and almost morbidly scrupulous. He regards himself as bankrupt in everything, and distrusts everyone. Deprived of the faculties which render us capable of enjoyment and of suffering, he is indifferent to everything. He began his career as an enthusiast for the freedom of the individual, for the democracy, and for the liberation of women, and has seen his hopes completely disappointed. He who was an ardent champion of free love has seen the woman of his choice, for whom he himself had great respect, sink in the deepest infamy.

He is now thirty years old. During some years' residence abroad he has lived a painful life as a lonely wanderer ; he has worn thread-bare clothing and endured poverty, hunger, and cold, and all the humiliations of a man laden with debt. He has slept at night in woods and open parks for want of a dwelling ; and has nourished himself with the gelatine and starch which were used in the laboratory where he was an assistant. As a result of his privations he had less power to resist alcohol, and although he was not a drunkard, the effect of the small quantity of drink which he could procure was too much for him. Abandoned to the mercy of fortune by his relatives, he was helped by a Swedenborgian, whom he hardly knew, to enter an institution for the cure of nervous diseases. After some months he was healed, and returned to the university in Sweden. He was told, however, that he would have to practise total abstinence. It was he who lent me Swedenborg's *Arcana Cœlestia*, and later on his *Apocalypsis Revelata*. He had not read them himself, but had found them

in the library of his mother, who was a Swedenborgian.

One thing surprises me, that although up to my forty-ninth year I have never come across the works of Swedenborg, whom the cultivated classes in Sweden openly despise, yet now he turns up everywhere—in Paris, on the Danube, in Sweden, and that in the course of a single half year.

Meanwhile my friend, with his destroyed illusions, remains indifferent in spite of the blows which fate has repeatedly dealt him. He cannot stoop, and thinks it unworthy of a man to kneel to unknown powers who might some day reveal themselves as tempters, whose temptations or tests one should have resisted to the uttermost.

I do not conceal from him my new religious views without, however, wishing to influence him. “You see,” I say to him, “religion is a thing which one must appropriate for oneself; it is no use preaching it.”

Often he listens to me with apparent attention, and often he smiles. Sometimes he disappears for a fortnight together, as

though he were vexed, but he comes again and looks as if he had been brooding over some thought. Sometimes, in order to help him, I let drop, as though by chance, an interrogatory remark, "Something is happening, isn't it?"

"I don't know; it is so absurd that there must be jugglery in it."

"What is it, then?"

"Every morning when I enter the laboratory I find my things in confusion,—you cannot think what it looks like,—and the table in a mess. And that although I take the greatest pains to keep the place clean."

"Is it some one with a spite against you?"

"Impossible, for I am the last to leave the room, and if there were anyone he would be immediately discovered."

"Then is it——?"

"Well, who?"

"Some one unseen?"

"I don't say so, but latterly it *does* seem as though some one were watching me, and could read my most secret thoughts. And

if I ever kick over the traces, I am pulled up at once in a moment."

"Have you ever had similar abnormal experiences before?"

"Not I myself, but my mother and sister, who are Swedenborgians, have. Wait a minute, though! I did have one, just two years ago, in Berlin."

"Let me hear it."

"It was as follows:—I entered a lavatory near the Linden Avenue one evening, and saw beside me a bare-headed man of a questionable and strange appearance. He had a protuberance on the back of his neck, and to my astonishment he 'vodeled'\* like a Tyrolese. The painful impression which this individual with his lugubrious physiognomy made on me remained with me unconsciously, and in order to shake it off I continued my walk outside the town, and finally found myself in the country. Tired and hungry I entered an inn, where I ordered at the bar a Frankfort sausage and a pint of beer. 'A Frankfort sausage and a pint

\* Gave a peculiar cry.



of beer,' repeated some one at my side, and, as I turned round, I saw the man with the protuberance on his neck. Thrown into complete confusion, I went on my way without waiting for what I had ordered, and, unable to give the reason for my abrupt departure, I have never thought any more of this insignificant occurrence, but I have a very vivid impression of it, and it just now recurs to me."

When he had finished he covered his eyes with both hands, as though he wished to obliterate the picture by rubbing the pupil of his eye which still retained the portrait of the man.

While the above narrative with its details is fresh in the reader's memory, I will introduce another, which, through its connection with the former, may perhaps bring us a little nearer our goal. On the first of May I went pretty early through the Park to eat dinner with a schoolmaster. When we had sat down at a table in the large, open balcony, which was empty, I suddenly experienced a feeling of discomfort,

and as I turned round on my chair I perceived a man of very questionable appearance, and with an unsteady, irresolute expression in his eyes.

"Who is that?" I asked my companion, who was an old inhabitant of Lund, and knew the whole population.

"A foreigner, certainly."

The stranger, bare-headed and silent, came near, and, when he stood directly in front of me, he regarded me with such a piercing look that I felt a burning pain in my breast. We changed our seats. The man followed us without breaking silence. His looks were neither malicious nor severe, but rather melancholy and expressionless like those of a somnambulist. Then I had a recollection, which was too vague to be conscious, and addressed a question to my companion. "That man there resembles one of our friends, but which of them?"

"Yes, certainly; he is just like what our friend Martin would be at forty-five."

At this moment there sprang up from a mass of confused memories the Berlin Lavatory

and "Friend Martin" (as the unfortunate doctor was called), pursued by this stranger.

Meanwhile the man had taken a seat near us and turned his back. How great was my astonishment when I noticed a protuberance on his neck! In order to clear up the matter, I asked my companion, "Can you see a protuberance on this fellow's neck?"

"Yes, distinctly. What of that?"

I did not answer, because it would have been too long a story. Besides, the school-master was a declared foe of occultism.

The same evening I saw Friend Martin in the middle of a swarm of students. Without beating about the bush I asked him directly, "Where were you to-day between one and two o'clock?"

"Why? Why do you ask that?" And he looked embarrassed as he spoke.

"Only answer my question."

"I was asleep. I am not accustomed to sleep in the day, and therefore your question embarrassed me."

"And yet you go outside and roam about during your sleep."

"It looks like it, for some days ago, while I slept, I saw the fire which had broken out in the Museum. That is the simple truth."

After this admission on his part, I described to him the appearance in the Park, and compared it with what he had seen in Berlin.

But he was in good spirits, and though the protuberance in the neck made him shudder, he exclaimed, "The description fits to a T. It is my double!"

And we both laughed.

\* \* \* \*

I pause here for a moment in order to expound the possible theories of the phenomenon known as a man's "double" (*doppelgänger*).

The Theosophists assume it as a fact that the soul, or the "astral body," has the power to quit the body and to clothe itself in a quasi-material form which under favourable circumstances can be visible to many. All so-called telepathic experiences are thus explained. The creations of the imagination have no reality, but some visions and hallucinations have a kind of materiality. Similarly,

in optics, one distinguishes between virtual and real images, the latter of which can be projected on a screen or fixed on a sufficiently sensitive photographic plate.

Suppose that an absent person thinks of me, by evoking my personality in his remembrance ; he only succeeds in creating a virtual image of me by a free and conscious effort of his own. But suppose again that an old aunt of mine in a foreign country sits at the piano without thinking of me, and sees me then standing in person behind the instrument ; she has *seen* a virtual image of me.

And this actually happened in the autumn of 1895. I remember that I was then passing through a dangerous illness in the French capital, when my longing to be in the bosom of my family overcame me to such a degree that I saw the inside of my house and for a moment forgot my surroundings, having lost the consciousness of where I was. I was really there behind the piano as I appeared, and the imagination of the old lady had nothing to do with the matter. But since she understood these kind of apparitions, and

knew their significance, she saw in it a precursor of death and wrote to ask if I were ill.

In order the better to elucidate this problem, I will insert here an essay of my own printed last year in the *Initiation*, which has points of contact with the above-mentioned occurrence.

“OBSERVATIONS ON THE IRRADIATION AND  
DILATABILITY OF THE SOUL.”

“To be beside oneself” and “to collect oneself” are two phrases in every-day use, which express well the capacity which the soul possesses of expanding and contracting. Fear makes it shrink and contract, and joy, happiness, or success make it expand.

Go alone into a full railway carriage, where no one knows another, but all are sitting silent. Each feels, according to his degree of sensibility, an extreme discomfort. There is a manifold crossing of irradiations from souls in different moods which causes a general feeling of oppression. It is not warm, but one feels as

though one were stifled ; the senses, charged to overflowing with magnetic fluids, feel as if they must explode ; the intensity of the electric streams, strengthened by influence and condensation, perhaps also by induction, has reached its maximum.

Then some one begins to speak. A discharge of electricity takes place, and the various currents neutralise each other when all present enter upon a trivial conversation to relieve a physical necessity.

The person fond of solitude draws back into his corner, closes his inner eye and ear, and sinks in himself in order to ward off a new "influence." Or he looks at the landscape through the window, and lets his thoughts wander, while he steps outside the magic circle of those shut up with him, to whom, however, he is indifferent. The secret of the success of a great actor consists in his inborn capacity of letting his soul "ray out," and thus enter into touch with the audience. In great moments there is actually a radiance round an eloquent speaker, visible even to the incredulous.

The actor with a dreamy nature, who has a keen intelligence, and has studied much, but not acquired the power of going out of himself, will never make a great impression on the stage. Shut up in himself, his mind cannot penetrate the minds of the spectators.

In the great crises of life, when existence itself is threatened, the soul attains transcendent powers.

It seems sometimes as though the fear of poverty drove the tortured soul to fly to seek a life somewhere else, where living is easier, and it is not for nothing that suicide attracts the unhappy by promising to open the gates of their prison.

Some years ago I had the following experience. One autumn morning I sat at my writing table before the window, which looked out on a gloomy street in a small industrial town of Moravia. In the neighbouring room, of which the door was on the jar, my wife, who was expecting her first confinement, was resting.

While I was writing, I imagined myself transplanted to a scene many hundred miles



north, which I well knew. Although where I was, it was autumn and approaching winter, I found myself in my thoughts under a green oak in the sunshine. The little garden which I had myself cultivated in my youth was there; the roses—I could tell them by their names—the syringas, the jasmines exhaled their scents so that I could smell them; I picked caterpillars off my cherry-trees, I trimmed the currant-bushes \* \* Suddenly I hear a hoarse cry, I find myself standing on the ground, I feel a kind of cramp in my spine causing intolerable pain, and fall senseless on my chair.

When I recover consciousness, I find that my wife had come from behind in order to say good morning, and had quite gently laid her hand upon my shoulder.

“Where am I?” That was my first question, and I said it in my native language, which my wife, as a foreigner, did not understand.

The impression which I received from this occurrence was, that my soul had dilated itself and left the body without breaking the con-

nection of the invisible threads, and I needed a certain though ever so small an interval to recollect in some degree that I was conscious and intact in the room, where I had just been sitting and working. If, according to the old methods of explanation, my soul had merely sunk in herself and still remained confined in the limits of the body, it would have been able to expand itself again with greater readiness and swiftness, and I would not have suffered so much through being surprised during my absence.

No. I was absent, "*franvarande*"—that is the Swedish word for "distracted"—and my soul returned so suddenly as to cause me suffering. But the pains were felt in the neighbourhood of the spine and not in the brain, and this reminds me of the important functions attributed to the "plexus solaris" when I studied medicine in my youth.

Another occurrence, which happened to me three years ago in Berlin, is to my mind sufficient proof that the exteriorisation or displacement of the soul can happen under certain extraordinary circumstances. After

soul-shattering crises, troubles, and an irregular life, I was sitting one night between one and half-past in a wine shop, at a table which was always reserved for our coterie. We had been eating and drinking since six o'clock, and I had been obliged the whole time to carry on the conversation practically alone. The problem was for me to give sensible advice to a young officer who was on the point of changing a military career for that of an artist. As he happened to be at the same time in love, his nerves were in a very overstrained condition, and after having received in the course of the day a letter containing reproaches from his father, he was quite beside himself. I forgot my own wounds while I was tending those of another. The task was a difficult one, and caused me some mental disturbance. After arguments and endless appeals, I wished to call up in his memory a past event which might influence his resolve. He had forgotten the occurrence in question, and in order to stimulate his memory, I began to describe it to him. "You remember that evening in the Augustiner

tavern." I continued to describe the table where we had eaten our meal, the position of the bar, the door through which people entered, the furniture, the pictures \* \* All of a sudden I stopped. I had half lost consciousness without fainting, and still sat in my chair. I was in the Augustiner tavern and had forgotten to whom I spoke, when I recommenced as follows: "Wait a minute, I am now in the Augustiner tavern, but I know very well that i am in some other place. Don't say anything \* \* I don't know you any more, but yet I know that I do. Where am I? Don't say anything; this is very interesting." I made an effort to raise my eyes—I don't know if they were closed—and I saw a cloud, a 'background of indistinct colour, and from the ceiling descended something like a theatre curtain; it was the dividing wall with shelves and bottles.

"Oh yes!" I said, relieved after feeling a pang pass through me, "I am in F.'s" (the wine shop).

The officer's face was distorted with alarm, and he wept.

“What is the matter?” I said to him.

“That was dreadful,” he answered.

“What?”

When I have related this story to others, they have objected that it was a fainting fit or an attack of giddiness, words which say little and explain nothing. First and foremost, fainting fits and giddiness are accompanied by loss of consciousness. Nor was it a case of amyosthenia (depression of muscular action), as I remained sitting on my chair, and spoke consciously about my partial unconsciousness.

At that time I was unaware of the phenomenon itself, and did not know the expression “exteriorisation of sensibility.” Now that I know it, I am sure that the soul possesses the power of expansion which it exercises in a very high degree during ordinary sleep, and at death to such an extent that it leaves the body, and is by no means extinguished.

Some days ago, as I was going along the pavement, I saw an inn-keeper before his door, loudly abusing a knife-grinder who was standing in the street. I did not want to

cut off the connection between the two, but it could not be avoided, and I felt a keen feeling of discomfort as I passed between the two quarrelling men. It was as though I divided a cord which was stretched between them, or rather as though I crossed a street which was being sprinkled on both sides with water.

The connection between friends, relatives, and especially between husband and wife, is a real bond and has a palpable actuality. We begin to love a woman, and deposit our soul piece-meal, so to speak, with her. We double our personality, and the loved one, who was formerly indifferent and neutral, begins to clothe herself in our other "I," and becomes our counterpart. When she takes it into her head to depart with our soul, the pain which it causes us is perhaps the most violent that there is, only to be compared to that of a mother who has lost her child. There is a painful sense of emptiness and woe to the man who has not strength enough to begin to divide himself again and to find another vessel to fill. Love is an act through which the masculine blossom attains to fruit, because

it is the man who loves, and it is a sweet illusion to suppose that he is loved by his wife, his other self, a creation of his own.

Between a married pair the invisible bond often develops itself in a mediumistic fashion. They can call each other from a distance, read each other's thoughts, and practise mutual "suggestion" when they like. They no longer feel the need of speech; the mere presence of the beloved gives joy, her soul radiates warmth. When they are divided the bond between them expands; the sense of longing and pining increases with distance, sometimes to such a degree as to involve the breaking of the bond, and thereby death.

For many years I have taken notes of all my dreams, and have arrived at the conviction that man leads a double life, that imaginations, fancies, and dreams possess a kind of reality. So that we are all of us spiritual somnambulists, and in dreams commit acts which, according to their varying character, accompany us when we are awake with feelings of satisfaction or an evil conscience and fears of the consequences. And from reasons, which

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I reserve the right to explain some other time, I believe that the so-called persecution-mania really springs from pains of conscience after evil deeds which one has committed in sleep, and of which vague recollections haunt us. The imaginations of the poet, which prosaic souls so despise, are realities.

“And what about death?” you ask.

To the brave man who does not set too great a value on life, I would at an earlier stage of my experience have recommended the following experiment, which I have repeatedly made, not without troublesome, but in all cases easily cured, physical results.

After closing windows, doors, and the stove-flue, I place an open bottle containing cyan-kalium on the table and lie down on the bed. The carbonic acid in the air liberates in a little time the cyanic acid in the bottle, and the well-known physical symptoms follow—a slight throbbing of the throat, and an indescribable taste in the mouth, which I might by analogy call “cyanic,” paralysis of the biceps-muscle, and pain in the stomach. The deadly effect of cyanic acid remains still

a mystery. Different authorities ascribe different methods of operation to this poison. One says, "paralysis of the brain"; another, "paralysis of the heart"; a third, "suffocation as a secondary consequence of the medulla oblongata being attacked," etc.

But since the effect may show itself at once, before absorption has taken place, the method of operation must be regarded much more as psychical, especially when one has regard to the use of cyanic acid in medicine as a quieting remedy in so-called nervous diseases.

As regards the condition of the soul under this experiment, I would say the following: It does not seem to undergo a slow extinction, but rather a dissolution during which the pleasant sensations far outweigh the trifling pains. The mental capacities gain in clearness, exactly contrary to their condition at the approach of sleep; one is in full possession of one's will, and I can break off the experiment by corking the bottle, opening the window, and inhaling chlorine or ammonia.

I do not lay much stress upon it, but supposing that we could obtain satisfactory

proofs of the temporary condition of death into which Indian fakirs can throw themselves, the experiment might be prolonged without danger. In case of an accident one must proceed with the various methods which are used to resuscitate a person who has been choked. The fakirs use warm compresses on the brain, the Chinese warm the pit of the stomach and cause sneezing. In his remarkable book, *Positive and Negative* (1890), Vial relates, following Trousseau and Piloux: "In the year 1825 Carrero stifled and drowned a large number of animals, which he afterwards resuscitated a long time after death by simply inserting needles into their brain."

\* \* \* \*

In my book *Inferno*, I have spoken of my brother in misfortune the German-American painter, and of the quack Francis Schlatter who was suspected of being his "double." The time has come when I am obliged to compromise my friend with the sole object of helping the investigation into the relation between them.

My friend's name was H., whether real or

assumed. When I had returned to Paris in August 1897, I was turning over, one day, the *Revue Spirite* for the year 1859. I found there an article, headed "My Friend H." Under this title a certain Herr H. Lugner had published in the feuilleton of the *Journal des Débats* for 26th November 1858 a narrative which he asserted to be fact, and offered to witness to, if necessary, as he himself was a friend of the hero of the adventure. The latter was a young man, aged five and twenty, of irreproachable morals and thoroughly amiable character.

H. could not keep awake as soon as the sun went down. An irresistible weariness came over him, and he sank gradually in a deep sleep, from which nothing could rouse him. In brief, H. lived a double life, so that at night he committed criminal acts in Melbourne under the name William Parker. When, later on, Parker was executed, H., in Germany, was simultaneously found dead in his bed.

Whether the story was true or a product of the imagination, it interested me, because

of the coincidence of names, and also of some of the circumstances. Modern literature has already dealt with the phenomenon of the *Doppelgänger* (double) in the famous romance *Trilby*, and in another by Paul Lindau. It would be interesting to know whether the authors have based their narrative on facts or no.

Meanwhile we return to friend Martin. In order to obtain some distraction, he undertook a cruise to Norrland and Norway, and expected to derive from it a real feeling of freedom and much pleasure. After some weeks I meet him in a street in Lund.

"Have you had a pleasant journey?" I ask.

"No; a devil's journey! I don't know what to believe. There is certainly some one who challenges me, and the fight is unequal. Listen! I went to Stockholm to amuse myself at the great exhibition, and though I have hundreds of friends there, I did not meet one. They were all in the country, and I found myself alone. I only stayed in my room one day, and was then turned out of it



by a stranger to whom my brother, by mistake, had previously promised it. Ill-luck made me so stupid that I did not go and see the exhibition, and as I wandered about alone in the streets, suddenly a heavy hand fell on my shoulder. It was a very seriously disposed uncle of mine, whom I had not seen twice in my life, and who was the last man I wished to see. He invited me to spend the whole evening with him and his wife. I had to swallow everything I disliked. It was like witchcraft.

Then I went on alone in a railway carriage for hundreds of miles, through scenery that was deadly dull. At Areskutan, the principal object of my excursion, there was only one hotel, and in this hotel all my antipathies had appointed a rendezvous. The Free Church pastor was feeding his flock there, and they were singing psalms morning, noon, and evening. It was enough to drive one wild, and yet it seemed quite natural. There was only one thing which seemed to me somewhat strange, or with a smack of the occult about it. That was, that in this quiet and well-

kept hotel they were hammering up large boxes at night."

"Over your head?"

"Yes; just over! And, strangely enough, this hammering followed me to Norway. When I ask the hotel manager for an explanation, he declared he had heard nothing."

"That is just like my own experience."

"Yes."

I would not have related these trivial and in themselves repellent stories, did not their very absurdity suggest the existence of a reality, which yet is neither real objectively nor a mere vision, but a phantasmagoria called up by the invisible powers, to warn, to teach, or to punish.

This condition, called by the theosophists "Astralplanet," is also described by Swedenborg in the last part of his *Arcana*, "Visiones et Visa."

There are two kinds of visionary states which are beyond nature, and in which I have been placed merely to experience what they are like, and what is to be understood by the expressions to be "rapt from the

body," and "to be carried by the spirit" to another place.

1. A man is placed in a condition between sleep and waking; when he is in this state he seems to himself to be fully awake. This is the condition of being "rapt from the body," when one does not know whether one is in the body or out of the body.

2. Wandering through the streets of a city and over the fields, and holding converse with spirits, I seemed to myself to be as much awake and alert as on ordinary occasions. Thus I wandered without quitting the road. Yet all the while I was in a vision, and saw woods, rivers, palaces, houses, men, and other things. But after I had wandered thus for some hours, I fell suddenly into a state of corporeal hallucination, and was aware that I ~~was~~ was in another place. At this I was greatly surprised, and saw that I was in such a condition as those are who are said to be "carried by the Spirit to another place."

\* \* \* \*

Friend Martin since his return from his excursion lives alone in his parents' house,

because the family have scattered in different directions for their summer holiday. I will not say that he is afraid, but he is uncomfortable. Sometimes he hears steps and other sounds from the room of his absent sister, sometimes sneezing. Some days ago he heard in the middle of the night a sharp metallic sound, like that of a scythe being sharpened. "Taking it all in all," he concluded, "wonderful things do occur, but if I once began to engage in dealings with the invisible powers I should be lost."

That was his last word, as autumn approached with great strides.

## VII

### STUDIES IN SWEDENBORG

WHILE all these occurrences went on in everyday life, I continued my studies in Swedenborg—that is to say, his works, which are hard to procure, fell into my hands one after the other, at very long intervals.

In the *Arcana Cœlestia*, hell is represented as everlasting, without any hope of an end, and bare of every word of comfort. The *Apocalypses Revelata* expounds a method of systematic penance, and the result was that I lived under its spell till the spring. Sometimes I shook it off while I entertained the hope that the Prophet was deceived in details, and that the Lord of Life and Death would show Himself more merciful. But what cannot be denied is the startling coincidence between Swedenborg's visions, and all events

great or small which have happened to me and my friends during this year of terror.

It was not till March that I found in an antiquarian bookseller's shop *The Wonders of Heaven and Hell* and *Conjugal Love*. Not till then was I freed from the spiritual burden that had secretly oppressed me ever since I first became aware of the Invisible. In them I learned that God is Love. He does not reign over slaves, and has therefore bestowed on mortals the gift of free will. Evil has no independent power, but is a servant of God, fulfilling the functions of a disciplinary force. Punishments are not endless; every one is free to expiate by patience the wrongs which he has done. The sufferings which are imposed upon us are intended to improve our character. The operations which constitute the preparation for a spiritual life begin with "Devastation" (*vastatio*), and consist in constriction of the chest, difficulty of breathing, symptoms of suffocation, heart affections, terrible attacks of fear, sleeplessness, nightmare. This process, which Sweden-

borg underwent in the years 1744 and 1745, is described in his book *Dreams*.

The diagnosis of this kind of illness corresponds in every point to the ailments which are just now so common, so that I do not shrink from drawing the conclusion that we are approaching a new era in which there will be spiritual awakening, and it will be a joy to live. Angina pectoris, sleeplessness, nightly terrors, all these symptoms which doctors wish to class as epidemic, are nothing else but the work of unseen powers. For how can the systematic persecution of healthy men by unprecedented bizarre occurrences, disturbances and annoyances be regarded as an epidemic sickness? An epidemic of coincidences? That is certainly absurd.

\* \* \* \*

Swedenborg has become my Virgil, who guides me through hell, and I follow him blindly. He certainly is a terrible chastiser, but he knows also how to comfort, and he seems to me less severe than the Protestant theologians. "A man may amass riches, if he does so honestly and uses them honestly ;

he may clothe himself and live according to his means; he may hold intercourse with people of the same social standing as himself, enjoy the innocent pleasures of life, look joyful and contented, and not morose. He can, in a word, live and act like a rich man in this world, and after he dies go straight to heaven, if only in his heart he has faith in God and love to Him, and behaves as he should towards his neighbour."

"I have met several of those who, before they died, had renounced the world and retired into solitude, in order to devote themselves to the contemplation of heavenly things, and thereby to make themselves a surer path to heaven. They nearly all had a gloomy and depressed appearance, seemed to be annoyed that others were not like them, and that they themselves were not rewarded with greater honour and a happier lot. They live in hidden places, like hermits, almost in the same way as they had lived in our world. Man is created to live in harmony with others; in society and not in solitude he finds numerous opportunities of



exercising Christian mildness towards his neighbours."

In solitude one only contemplates oneself, forgetting all others. Consequently one thinks only of oneself, or of the world, in order to avoid it or to feel the want of it, which is the opposite of Christian love.

As regards the so-called everlasting punishments, at the last moment, the seer appears as a deliverer, and allows a ray of hope to dawn on us. He says, "Those among them, for whose deliverance one may hope, are set in waste places, which only afford a picture of desolation. They are left there till their sorrow has darkened into despair, because this is the only means to conquer the evil and falsehood which rule them. Arrived at this point, they cry out that they are no better than animals, that they are full of hate and all kinds of abomination, and that they are damned. These exclamations are pardoned them, as being cries of despair, and God softens their mood, so that their expressions of reproach and abuse do not transgress the assigned limits. When they have suffered all that can

be suffered, so that their bodies are also dead, they are troubled no more about it, and are prepared for deliverance. I have seen some of them taken to heaven after they have been visited with all the sufferings of which I have spoken. When they were admitted, they displayed such great joy that I was moved to tears." What the Catholics call "*conscientia scrupulosa*," a tender conscience, is caused by malicious spirits, who induce pangs of conscience for nothing at all. They delight in laying a load on the conscience, and this state has nothing to do with the improvement of the sinner. In a similar way there are unwholesome temptations. Evil spirits evoke in the depth of the soul all the evil it has committed since childhood, and bring its worst side uppermost. But the angels discover all the good and true which they can in the exhausted soul. That is the strife which is revealed under the name, "pangs of conscience."

I stop here, because I do my Master an injustice by tearing asunder the web which he has so well woven together, and by exhibit-

ing the fragments as samples. Swedenborg's work is one of enormous compass, and he has answered all my questions, however presumptuous they may have been. Disquiet soul, suffering heart, "*Take up and read.*"

## VIII

### CANOSSA

**E**XHAUSTED by these mysterious persecutions, I have for a long time undertaken a careful examination of my conscience, and, true to my new resolve not to justify myself as against my neighbour, I find my past life abominable and am disgusted at my own personality.

“It is true that I have incited the younger generation to rebel against law and order, against religion, authority, morality. That is my godlessness, for which I am now punished, and which I now retract.”

So I say to myself, and after a pause in the current of my thoughts I reverse the question, and ask, “And the others, the opposers of my revolutionary views, the pious defenders of morality, of the State, of religion,

can *they* sleep at night? and have the Powers prospered them in their worldly affairs?"

When I pass in review the pillars of society and their various fortunes, I am compelled to answer, "No!"

The brave champion of the Ideal in poetry and in life, the poet popular with the steady and respectable bourgeois class, cannot now sleep at night owing to violent attacks of hysteria. To add to his troubles, his guardian angel left him in the lurch, so that his affairs became embarrassed from his engaging in speculations which nearly reduced him to beggary. It is no joy for me to remember this, for it increases my depression when I see how the noblest efforts only lead to beggary.

What of my opponent in religion? He who wished to have me imprisoned for blasphemy has himself been arrested for falsification in the transfer of property. But don't think, reader, that I make his sin an excuse for my blasphemies. It is a trouble to me not to be able to keep my belief in the purifying effect of Christianity, in

view of such a startling example to the contrary.

Then the lady who took morality under her protection, the friend of oppressed women, the prophetess who in fiery and candid essays preached celibacy to young men—what has become of her? No one knows it, but on her there rests a dark and terrible suspicion. Edifying, is it not? As to the other pillars of moral and religious order, I pass them over, whether they have put a bullet through their brains, or decamped to avoid an ominous investigation. Speaking briefly, judgment seems to strike the just and unjust alike, and one may prove as good as another.

What is it then that is taking place in the world to-day? Is it the irrevocable doom pronounced against Sodom? Must all perish? Are there none righteous? Not one!

May we then be friends and suffer in common as fellow-sinners, without exalting ourselves, one above another.

\* \* \* \*

I have apologised for my culpable actions, and abjure my past. Let me now say a word

in self-defence. It is a common characteristic of youth in all ages to be in revolt, frivolous, disorderly. Am I the first inventor of revolt or sin? Formerly I was the youth led astray, the child of my time, the disciple of my teachers, the victim of seduction. Whose is the fault, and why have they made me a scapegoat? Suppose that it was a lie, and that I am not the person for whom men take me?

But here the accusation of "black magic" comes in to turn the scales.

But it was out of ignorance that I had recourse to that.

Well then, what about the revolt against the Invisible?

Yes, I did revolt. But how about the others who spent their lives on their knees in devotion and self-denial, and who have all been disowned?

Let us acknowledge that the state of affairs is desperate, and that we are all handed over to the power of the Prince of this world to be bowed in the dust and humbled till we are disgusted with ourselves, in order that we

may feel homesick for heaven. Self-contempt, anger at one's own personality, the result of vain endeavours to improve oneself—that is the way to a higher life.

And remember one thing: the way to Rome, the imperial route lay through Canossa !



## IX

### THE SPIRIT OF CONTRADICTION

IN spite of all the sufferings which I have endured, the spirit of rebellion in me is still erect, and suggests doubts as to the benevolent designs of my invisible guide. An accident (?) has brought into my hands Schikaneder's text of the opera of the *Magic Flute*. The sufferings and temptations of the young pair suggest to me the thought that I have let myself be duped by misleading voices, and that I had bowed myself and submitted, simply because I could not endure the pains and difficulties.

Immediately I remember Prometheus who storms at the gods while the vulture gnaws his liver. And at last the rebel is admitted to the circle of the Olympians without making an open recantation.

The fire is now kindled, and immediately evil spirits add fuel to it.

An occult magazine, sent by post, encourages my cowardice by propounding subversive theories, such as the following: "As is well known, in the old books of the Veda, Creation is represented as a single act of sacrifice, in which God, both Priest and Victim, offers Himself by dividing Himself." That is the very idea which I have expressed in the *Mystery Play* appended to "*Meister Olof*."

Further: "All the elements, which conjointly constitute the universe, are nothing else than fallen divinities, which, through the stone, plant, animal, human, and angelic kingdoms, climb up to heaven, only to fall down again." This idea was characterised by the famous Alexander von Humboldt and the historian Cantu as sublime.

(Yes, it is sublime.)

"As is well known, the Greek and Roman gods were originally men. Jupiter himself, the greatest of all, was born in Crete, where he was suckled by the she-goat Amalthea. He thrust his father from the throne, and

took all possible precautions not to be dethroned himself. When the giants attacked him, and most of the gods left him in the lurch, in a cowardly way, and hid themselves under the shapes of plants in Egypt, he had the good luck, with the help of the bravest gods, to remain victor. But it was not without considerable difficulty."

"In Homer, the gods fight against men and are sometimes wounded. Our Gallic forefathers also fought against heaven, and shot arrows against it when they believed themselves threatened by it. The Jews were animated by the same feelings as the heathen. They had Jehovah (God), but they also had Elohim (Gods). The Bible begins thus: 'He who is, who was, and who will be—the One in the many.'"

"When Adam had committed the '*beata culpa*,' which, so far from being a fall, was a sublime step upwards, as the snake had prophesied, God said, 'Behold, Adam has become as *one of us*, to know good and evil.' And He added, 'Now, therefore, lest he put forth

his hand, and take of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.'”

The ancients accordingly saw in the gods men who had elevated themselves to despotic power, and sought by an overthrow of the constitution to maintain that power, while preventing others from raising themselves in their turn. Hence sprang the conflict, men endeavouring to drive away the usurping deities, and the latter struggling to maintain the power they had arrogated to themselves.

“Now the flood-gates are opened with a vengeance! Only consider! We are gods!”

“And the sons of the gods descended to earth and married the daughters of men, and they brought forth children. From this intermixture came the giants, and all famous men, warriors, statesmen, authors, artists.”

This was fine seed to sow in a refractory mind, and the Ego inflated itself again, “Only think! We are gods!”

The same evening when all in the restaurant were in high spirits, a circle was formed round a doctor of music. My friend the philosopher, to whom I had imparted the discovery of our

relationship to the gods, asked to hear Mozart's *Don Juan*, especially the finale of the last act.

"What is that about?" asked one, who was not at home in the classical repertory of music.

"The devil comes and carries away the Sybarite."

The abysmal torment, so well described by Mozart—who very likely knew pangs of conscience of this kind, as the husband of a woman he had seduced committed suicide on his account—is unrolled in a succession of melancholy tones like a cutting neuralgia. The laughter stops, the jests cease, and when the piece is finished there is a painful silence.

"Here's to your ~~health~~!" says some one.

They drink. But the cheerfulness is at an end; the Olympic mood is quenched, for the night is coming on and the terrible chromatic successions of notes echo like innumerable waves which rise and fall, and hurl human derelicts aloft in the air in order to swallow them the next moment.

\* \* \* \*

While the descendants of the gods make

vain attempts to assume a tone becoming their high birth, night has come, and the restaurant is closed. The party must break up and go, each to his lonely bed. As we pass the Cathedral veiled in the shadows of the night, a white light suddenly flashes on the façade, on which are depicted saints and sinners kneeling before the throne of the Lamb.

“What is that?” we ask, for there is no thunderstorm. We are startled, and remain standing, only to find that it is a photographer working in his shop by the magnesium light. We are annoyed at our nervousness, and for my part I involuntary think of the theatrical lightning when Don Juan is carried off.

As I enter my room I feel a kind of alarm, chilly and feverish, at the same moment. When I have taken off my overcoat, I hear the wardrobe door open of itself. “Is any one there?”

No answer. My courage sinks, and for a moment I feel inclined to go out again and spend the night in the dark and dirty

streets. But weariness and despair hamper me, and I prefer to die in a comfortable bed.

While I undress I look forward to a bad night, and once happily in bed I take up a book to distract my thoughts. Then my toothbrush falls from the washing-stand on to the ground without any visible cause. Immediately afterwards the cover of my jug rises and falls again with a clash before my eyes. Nothing has occurred to shake the room, the night being perfectly still.

The universe has no secrets veiled from giants and geniuses, and yet reason is helpless before a jug cover which defies the law of gravitation. Fear of the unknown makes a man who thought he had solved the riddle of the Sphinx tremble!

I was nervous, terribly nervous; I would not, however, quit the battlefield, but continued to read. Then there fell a spark, or a small will-o'-the-wisp, like a snowflake from the ceiling, and was quenched on my book. Yet, reader, I did not go mad!

Sleep, sacred sleep, assumes the form of

an ambush in which murderers lurk. I dare not sleep any more, and yet have no power to keep myself awake. This is really hell! As I feel the torpor of sleep stealing over me, a galvanic shock like a thunderbolt strikes me, without, however, killing me.

Hurl thy shafts, proud Gaul, against heaven! Heaven in its turn never stops hurling.

\*                    \*                    \*                    \*

Since all resistance is useless, I lay down my arms although after relapses into refractoriness. During this last unequal strife I see will-o'-the-wisps even in broad daylight, but I attribute this to an affection of the eyes. Then I find in Swedenborg an explanation of the meaning of these flickering flames which I have never seen since:—

“Other spirits try to convince me of the opposite of what the instructing spirits have said to me. These spirits of contradiction were upon earth men who were banished from society for their criminality. One recognises their approach by a flickering flame which seems to drop before one's face.



They settle on people's backs, and their presence is felt in the limbs. They preach that one should not believe what the instructing spirits, together with the angels, have said, nor behave himself in accordance with their teaching, but live in licence and liberty as he chooses. These spirits of contradiction generally come when the others have gone. Men know what they are worth, and trouble themselves little about them; but through them they learn to distinguish between good and evil, for the quality of good is learnt through acquaintance with its opposite."

## X

### EXTRACTS FROM MY DIARY, 1897

*Feb. 12th.*—PULLED out of bed after I have heard a woman's voice. St. Chrysostom, the misogynist, says: "What is woman? The enemy of friendship, the punishment that cannot be escaped, the necessary evil, the natural temptation, the longed for misery, the fountain of tears which is never dry, the worst masterpiece of creation in white and dazzling array."

"Since the first woman made an agreement with the Devil, why should her daughters not do so likewise? Created as she was from a crooked rib, her whole turn of mind is crooked, and inclined towards evil."

Well said! St. Chrysostom, the Golden mouthed!

*Feb. 28th.*—The chaffinches warble, the

blue glimpses of the sea in the distance invite me, but as soon as I reach after my carpet-bag I am attacked by the invisible powers. Flight is in fact cut off from me. I am imprisoned here. In order to distract my mind I try to work at my book *Inferno*, but that is not permitted me. As soon as I take up the pen my power of recollection seems to be extinguished. I can remember nothing, or only such events as have no significance.

*April 2nd.*—A German author asks my opinion of Count Bismarck for a paper which is collecting adverse and favourable opinions of the Chancellor. My own was this: "I must admire a man who has understood how to dupe his contemporaries so well as Bismarck. His work was supposed to be the unification of Germany, and yet he has divided the great kingdom in two, with one Emperor in Berlin and another in Vienna."

In the evening there is a scent of jasmine blossoms in my room, a gentle feeling of peace take possession of my mind, and this night I

sleep quietly (Swedenborg says that the presence of a good spirit or angel is known by a balmy perfume. The theosophists maintain the same, but call angels "Mahatmas").

*April 5th.*—I hear that a great piece of sculpture by Ebbe, representing a crucified woman, has been broken during its passage to the Stockholm Exhibition. On the other hand, my friend H.'s picture of the crucified woman has been seized for debt, and hung up in a courtyard over the dustbin.

*April 10th.*—Read a good deal of sorts—Chateaubriand's *Memoires d'outre-tombe*; Las Casas' *Diary of St. Helena*. Who was Napoleon? Of whom was he the re-incarnation?

He was born in Ajaccio, of Greek colonists who derive their name from Ajax. 1. Ajax, the son of Telamon, was conquered by Odysseus, and maddened by fury he slaughtered the flocks of the Greeks in the belief that he was spreading death among his enemies. One day when one of the patron gods of Troy had enveloped both armies in a cloud in order to help the flight of the Trojans, he cried, "O

Zeus! give us light, though thou slay us in the light! 2. Ajax, son of Oileus, suffered shipwreck on the home voyage from the siege of Troy, but saved himself by climbing a cliff where he obstinately defied the gods, and was, as a punishment, drowned in the depths of the sea. "Ajax defying the gods" has become a proverb. Napoleon was prematurely born on a mat adorned with scenes from the *Iliad*. Paola a Porta said one day to the young Napoleon, "There is nothing modern about thee; thou art a man out of Plutarch."

Before Napoleon's birth, Rousseau had interested himself in Corsica, and its inhabitants wished to have him as a ruler. "There is still a land in Europe," he said, "where it is possible to give laws: that is the island of Corsica. I have a foreboding that this little island will fill Europe with wonder."

Nordille Bonaparte in the year 1266 pledged his honour for Konradin von Schwaben, who was executed by Charles of Anjou. The Franchini branch of the Bonaparte family bore on its shield of arms three golden lilies, like the Bourbons.

Napoleon was related to Orsini. Orsini was the name of the assassin who attempted the life of Napoleon III. On three islands Napoleon spent his days of adversity,—Corsica, Elba, and St. Helena. In a geography which he composed in his youth he mentions the last, with the two words “little island.” (Too little indeed he found it afterwards!) During the war with England, he sent a cruiser without any obvious cause to the neighbourhood of St. Helena.

The death of Napoleon affords plenty of material to the imagination of an occultist.

“There was a terrible storm, the rain fell without intermission, and the wind threatened to sweep everything away. The ‘willow-tree under which Napoleon had been accustomed to take the air had been broken; the trees of the plantation had been torn up and scattered about. A single indiarubber still stood erect, till a whirlwind seized it, tore it up, and hurled it in the mud. Nothing that the Emperor loved could survive him.”

The patient could not bear the light; he had to be kept in a dark room. When at the

point of death he sprang out of bed in order to go out into the garden.

“Spasmodic twitchings of the navel and the stomach, deep sighs, out-cries, convulsive movements which during the death-struggle terminate in a loud and painful sobbing.” Noverrez, who had been ill, became delirious. “He imagines that the Emperor is threatened, and calls for help.”

After Napoleon had given up the ghost, a smile of peace lay on his lips, and the corpse retained this look of calm in the funereal vault for nineteen years. When the grave was opened in 1840, the body was in a state of perfect preservation. The soles of the feet were white. (White soles of the feet, according to Swedenborg, signify the forgiveness of sins.)

The hands were well preserved (the left, however, was not white), soft, and still retained their beautiful shape. The whole body was dead-white, as though one saw it through thick lace. In the upper jaw were only three teeth. (A strange coincidence—the Duke of Enghien\* had only three teeth when

\* Executed by Napoleon's orders.

he was shot.) And in parenthesis it may be added the Duke was borne after parturition-pangs of forty-eight hours. He was dark blue, and without a sign of life. Having been wrapped in a cloth that had been steeped in spirits, he was held too close to a light and took fire. Not till then did he begin to live.

Napoleon was placed in a coffin in a green uniform (green clothes are a favourite dress of wizards).

Chateaubriand writes: "Napoleon's commission as a captain was signed by Louis XVI. on the 30th of August 1792, and the King abdicated on August 10th.

"Explain this who can. What protector furthered the schemes of this Corsican? The Eternal."

*April 18th, Easter day.*—On a fire-brand in the oven I saw the letters I.N.R.I. (Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews).

*May 3rd.*—I begin to work at the *Inferno*.

I am told that a very well-known journalist has been suddenly attacked by nightly visitations of the now common nervous disease which I have described. The occultists



connect this with an inconsiderate obituary notice which he wrote of a worthy man recently dead.

In reading Wagner's *Rheingold*, I discover a great poet, and understand now why I have not comprehended the greatness of this musician, whose music is the only proper accompaniment to his words. Moreover, *Rheingold* has a special message for me:—

“*Wellgunde*: Knowest thou not who alone is permitted to forge the gold?

“*Woglinde*: Only he who renounces the might of love and drives the joy of it away, obtains the magic power of moulding the gold into a ring.

“*Wellgunde*: Well then, we are safe and free of care, for all that live loves. Love none can avoid.

“*Woglinde*: Least of all he,—the amorous imp.

\* \* \* \*

“*Alberich* (stretching his hand after the gold): I tear the gold from the cleft and forge the avenging ring, for—let the stream hear it!—I curse love!”

*May 12th.*—With dull resignation I have for five months drunk coffee made of chicory without complaining. I wanted to see if there was any limit to the enterprising spirit of the dishonest woman who makes my morning coffee. For five months I have suffered, now I will for once enjoy the divine drink with the intoxicating aroma. For this purpose I buy a pound of the dearest coffee in the middle of the day. In the evening I read in Sar Peladan's *L'Androgyne*, p. 107, the following anecdote of an old missionary : "At the end of a missionary journey, during an important sermon, I am struck with powerlessness as soon as I have pronounced the words 'my brothers,'—not a thought in my brain, not a word on my lips. 'Holy Virgin!' I prayed secretly, 'I have only retained one weakness, my cup of coffee, I offer it up to Thee.' Immediately my elasticity of mind returned, I outdid myself and benefited many souls."

What a rôle coffee has played in my family as a disturber of domestic peace! I am ashamed to think of it, all the more as a

happy result does not depend on goodwill or cleverness, but on circumstances out of our control.

Accordingly to-morrow I shall have the greatest enjoyment or the greatest chagrin.

*May 13th.*—The woman has made the most horrible coffee imaginable.

I sacrifice it to the Powers, and henceforth drink chocolate without murmuring.

*May 26th.*—Excursion to the beech-wood. Some hundreds of young people have collected there. They sing melodies belonging to the time when I was young, thirty years ago. They play the games and dance the dances of my youth. Melancholy overcomes me, and suddenly my whole past life unrolls before the eyes of my spirit. I can survey the path I have traversed, and feel dazzled. Yes, it will soon end; I am old, and the path descends to the grave. I cannot restrain my tears,—I am old.

*June 1st.*—A young doctor of a gentle nature, and such a sensitive disposition that the mere fact of his existence causes him suffering, spends the evening in my company.

He also is plagued by qualms of conscience; he bewails the past which cannot be altered, though not worse than that of others. He explains to me the Mystery of Christ. "We cannot do again what has once been done, we cannot obliterate a single evil deed; and this thought leads to pure despair. Then it is that Christ reveals Himself. He alone can wipe out the debt which cannot be paid, perform a miracle, and lift off the burden of an evil conscience and of self-reproach. '*Credo quia absurdum*' and I am saved.

"But that I cannot, and I prefer to pay my own debts by my sufferings. There are hours when I long for a cruel death, to be burnt alive at the stake, and to feel the joy of injuring my own body—this prison of a soul which strives upwards. The kingdom of heaven for me means to be freed from material needs, to see enemies again in order to pardon them and to press their hands. No more enemies! No malice! That is my kingdom of heaven. Do you know what makes life bearable for me? The fact that I sometimes imagine it to be only half real, an evil

dream inflicted on us as a punishment, and that in the moment of death we awake to the real reality and come to see that it was only a dream,—all the evil that one has done, only a dream! So the pangs of conscience vanish together with the act that was never committed. That is redemption and deliverance.”

*June 25th.*—I have now finished writing *Inferno*. A lady-bird has settled on my hand. I await an omen for the journey for which I am preparing. The lady-bird flies off towards the south. Very well, let us go south.

From this moment I resolve on going to Paris. But it seems to me doubtful how far the Powers will agree with me. A prey to inner conflicts I let July pass, and with the commencement of August I wait for a sign to determine me. Sometimes it appears to me that the guides of my destiny are not agreed among themselves, and that I am the object of a protracted discussion. One urges me on, and another holds me back. Finally, on the morning of the 24th August, I get

out of bed, pull up the window-blind, and see a crow standing on the chimney of a very high house. It stands just like the cock on the tower of Nôtre Dame, and looks as though it were about to fly towards the south.

I open the window. The bird rises, keeps close to the wind, flies straight towards me, and disappears. I take the omen, and pack my things.

## XI

### IN PARIS

ONCE more,—is it for the last time? I get out at the Northern Station. I do not ask now, “What have I to do here?” as I feel at home in the chief city of Europe. Gradually a resolve has been ripening in me, not quite clear I confess, to take refuge in the Benedictine cloister at Solesmes.

But first, I go and visit my old haunts with their painful, and yet such pleasant, memories,—the garden of the Luxembourg, the Hôtel Orfila, the churchyard of Mont Parnasse, and the Jardin des Plantes. In the Rue Censier I remain standing a moment in order to cast a stolen look into the garden of my hotel on the Rue de la Clef. Great is my emotion at the sight of the pavilion containing the room where I escaped death

in that terrible night when I unconsciously wrestled with it. My feelings may be imagined as I turned my steps to the Jardin des Plantes and perceived the traces of the 'waterspout which devastated my favourite walk before the bears' and bisons' houses. On my return, in the street Saint Jaques I discover a spiritualist bookshop and buy Allan Kardec's *Book of Spirits*, hitherto unknown to me. I read it, and find it is Swedenborg and Blavatsky over again; and as I find my own "case" treated of everywhere, I cannot conceal from myself that I am a spiritualist. I, a spiritualist! Could I have believed I should end as one when I laughed at my former chief in the royal library at Stockholm because he was an adherent of spiritualism! One knows not into what harbour one will finally run.

While I continue my studies in Allan Kardec, I notice a gradual reappearance of the symptoms which disquieted me before. The noises over my head recommenced, I am again attacked by compression of the chest, and feel afraid of everything. I do



not, however, succumb, and continue to read the spiritualistic magazines while I keep a careful watch over my thoughts and acts. Then, after quite plain warnings, I am woken up one night exactly at two o'clock by a heart attack.

I understand the hint. It is forbidden to penetrate into the secrets of the Powers. I throw away the forbidden books, and peace immediately returns—a sufficient proof for me that I have followed the Higher Will. On the following Sunday I am present at vespers in Nôtre Dame. Deeply impressed by the ceremony, although I do not understand a word of it, I burst into tears, and leave the cathedral with the conviction that here, in the Mother Church, is the harbour of salvation. But no! It was not so! For the next day I read in *La Presse* that the Abbot of the Solesmes Convent has just been deposed for immorality.

“Am I, then, always to be the plaything and sport of the invisible Powers?” I exclaimed, struck by so well-aimed a blow. Then I was silent, and suppressed unseemly criticism, determined to await the end.

The next book which accidentally falls into my hands allows me to catch a glimpse of the purposes of my Guide. It is Haubert's *Temptation of St. Anthony*. "All those who are tormented by longing for God I have devoured," says the Sphinx. This book makes me ill, and I am alarmed when I recognise in it the thoughts which I have expressed in my mystery-play mentioned above—regarding the admission of evil into the kingdom of the good God. After reading it, I threw it away like a temptation of the Devil, who is the author of it. "Anthony makes the sign of the cross, and resumes his prayers." So the book ends, and I follow his example.

After that, and at the propitious moment, I come across Huysman's *En route*. Why did not this confession of an occultist fall into my hands before? Because it was necessary that two analogous destinies should be developed on parallel lines, so that one might be strengthened by the other. It is the history of an over-curious man, who challenges the Sphinx and is devoured by her, that his

soul may be delivered at the foot of the Cross. Well, as far as I am concerned, a Catholic may go to the Trappists and confess to the priest; for my part, however, it is enough that my sin be publicly acknowledged in writing. Besides, the eight weeks which I have spent in Paris writing the present book may well be the equivalent and more of entering a convent, because I have lived a thorough hermit's life. A little room, not larger than a monk's cell, with a barred window high up under the ceiling, has been my dwelling. Through the bars of the window, which looks into a deep courtyard, I can see a fragment of the sky and a grey wall overgrown with ivy which climbs upward to the light. My loneliness, which I find terrible in itself, is still more oppressive in the restaurant among a noisy crowd of people twice a-day. Add to this the cold—a perpetual draught through the room which has given me violent neuralgia,—pecuniary anxieties with no means of relieving them, the daily increasing bill, and it may be imagined what the total effect is!

And then the pangs of conscience! Formerly when I regarded myself as responsible, it was only the remembrance of committed follies that pained me. Now it is the evil itself, my sinful acts, which constitute my scourge. To crown all, my past life appears to me merely as a network of crime, a skein composed of godlessness, wickednesses, blunders, brutalities in word and act. Whole scenes out of my past unrolled before my gaze. I see myself in this and that situation, and always a preposterous one. I am astonished that anyone has ever been able to love me. I accuse myself of every possible crime; there is not a meanness, not a disagreeable act, which is not marked in black chalk on a white slate. I am filled with terror at myself, and would like to die.

There are moments when shame sends the blood to my cheeks and to my ear-tips. Selfishness, ingratitude, malice, envy, pride—all the deadly sins weave their ghostly dance before my awakened conscience.

While my mind thus tortures itself, my health deteriorates, my strength decreases,

and, together with the emaciation of the body, the soul begins to have a presentiment of her deliverance from the mire.

At present I read Töpffer's *Le Presbytere* and Dickens's *Christmas Tales*, and they impart to me an indescribable inward calm and joy. I return to the ideals of the best period of my youth, and recover the treasures which I had squandered in the game of life. Faith returns, and with it, trust in the natural goodness of men ; faith in innocence, unselfishness, virtue.

Virtue ! This word has disappeared from modern use ; it has been declared null and void and thoroughly false.

Just now I see in the papers that my drama, *Herr Bengt's Wife*, has been acted in Copenhagen. In this play love and virtue triumph just as in the *Secret of Gilde*. The drama has not pleased the public any more than when it was first acted in 1882. Why ? Because this fuss about virtue is considered idle talk.

I have again read Maupassant's *Horla*. That is the finale out of *Don Juan* over

again. Some one steals unseen into the bedroom in the middle of the night. He drinks water and milk, and finishes by sucking the blood of the wretched Don Juan, who, hunted to death, is forced to lay hands on himself.

That is a real experience. I recognise myself in it, and I confess that my senses are disturbed ; but some one has a hand in it.

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My health constantly gets worse, for there are cracks in the wall so that smoke penetrates into my room. To-day when I walked in the street the pavement moved under my feet like the deck of a ship swaying up and down. Only with considerable difficulty can I make the ascent to the Garden of the Luxembourg. My appetite grows continually less, and I only eat in order to still the pangs of hunger.

An occurrence which has often happened since my arrival in Paris has caused me to make various reflections. Inside my coat, on the left side, exactly over the heart, there is heard a regular ticking ; it reminds me of the ticking noise in walls produced by the insect called, in Sweden, "the carpenter" and also

the "death-watch," believed to presage somebody's death. I thought at first it was my watch, but found it was not so, as the ticking continued after I had laid the watch aside. It is not the buckle of my suspenders, nor the lining of my vest. I accept the explanation of the death-watch, as it suits me best.

A few nights ago I had a dream which again aroused my longing to be able to die, by holding out the hope of a better existence, where there is no danger of a relapse into the misery of life. Having gone too far on a projecting ledge bounded by a steep precipice hid in darkness, I fell head foremost in an abyss. But strangely enough I fell upwards instead of downwards. I was closely surrounded by a dazzling halo of light, and I saw——. What I saw gave me two simultaneous ideas, "I am dead, and I am delivered." A feeling of the greatest happiness overcame me, together with the consciousness that the other life was now over. Light, purity, freedom, filled my spirit, and as I cried, "God!" I obtained the certainty that I had won forgiveness, that hell was behind me, and

that heaven was open. Since that night I feel still more homeless than before in this world, and like a tired, weary child, I long to be able to "go home" to rest my heavy head on a mother's bosom, to sleep on the lap of a mother, the pure spouse of an infinite God, who calls Himself my Father, and whom I dare not approach.

But this wish is connected with another—to see the Alps, and more especially the Dent du Midi in the Canton Valais. I love this mountain more than the other Alps, without being able to say why. Perhaps it is the remembrance of my residence on the Lake of Geneva, where I wrote *Real Utopias*, and of the scenery there which reminded me of heaven. There I have spent the most beautiful hours of my life, there have I loved,—loved wife, children, humankind, the universe, God. "I lift up my hands to God's mountain and house."

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PARIS, October, 1897.



## XII

### WRESTLING JACOB

(A FRAGMENT)

AFTER my return to Paris at the end of August 1897, I found myself suddenly isolated. My friend the philosopher, whose daily companionship had been a moral support for me, and who had promised to follow me to Paris in order to spend the winter there, has delayed in Berlin. He is not able to explain what detains him in Berlin, as Paris is the goal of his journey, and he is very eager to see the City of Light.

I have waited for him three months, and receive the impression that Providence wishes to have me alone, in order to separate me from the world and to drive me into the desert, that the chastising spirits may

thoroughly shake and sift my soul. In this Providence has done right, for solitude has educated me by compelling me to hold aloof from my social pleasures, which had considerably increased, and by depriving me of every friendly support. I have grown accustomed to speak to the Lord, to confide only in Him, and have as good as ceased to feel the need of men; an attitude which has always seemed to me to be the ideal one of independence and freedom.

I am obliged to renounce even the convent in which I expected to find the protection of religion and of harmony with one's fellows. The life of the eremite was imposed upon me, and I have received it as a chastisement and an education, regardless of the fact that at the age of forty-eight it is difficult to change one's rooted habits for new ones.

I live, as mentioned above, in a small room, narrow as a convent cell, with a barred window high up under the ceiling, which looks out on a courtyard and a stone wall overgrown with an immense quantity of ivy.

In the evening I go out for my meal, and

go straight to the restaurant, without first taking a liqueur to provoke an appetite,—a thing I dislike doing now. Why I choose the little restaurant on the Boulevard St. Germain it would be difficult for me to explain. Perhaps it is the recollection of the two terrible evenings I spent there last year with my occultist friend, the German-American, which fascinates and draws me thither, to such a degree that every attempt to go to another restaurant results in a degree of discomfort which might be called unfair, and which drives me back to this one, which I hate. The reason is that my former friend has left unpaid debts here, and that I have been recognised as his companion. For this reason, and because we have been heard speaking German, I am treated as a Prussian, that is to say, I am served very badly. It is no use for me to make silent protests by leaving my visiting cards behind, or purposely forgetting letters bearing the Swedish postmark. I see myself compelled to suffer and to pay for the guilty. No one but I sees the logic in this position, nor that it is an atone-

ment for a crime. It is simply a piece of justice which cannot be objected to, and for two months I chew the horribly bad food which reeks of the dissector's knife.

The manageress, who, pale as a corpse, sits installed at the cashier's desk, greets me with a triumphant air, and I am accustomed to say to myself, "Poor old woman, she has certainly had to eat rats during the siege of Paris in 1871!"

But it seems as though she begins to feel sympathy with me when she sees my dull submission and endurance. There are moments when she seems to me to look paler,—when she sees me come alone, always alone, and always thinner. It is the bare truth that after passing two months in this way, when I buy new collars I must buy them nearly two inches smaller. My cheeks have become hollow and my clothes hang in folds.

Then all of a sudden they seem disposed to give me better food, and the manageress smiles at me. At the same time the feeling of being bewitched ceases, and I go my way

without rancour, and as if freed from a burden, with the assurance that for my part the penance is over, and perhaps also for my absent friend. If it was mere fancy on my part that I was badly treated, and if the manageress was quite blameless, I ask her pardon. In that case it was I who punished myself with a well-deserved chastisement.

“The chastising spirits take possession of the imagination of the man who deserves punishment, and effect his moral improvement by letting him see everything distorted” (Swedenborg).

How often it has happened to me that when I really wished to enjoy a meal, all the dishes inspired disgust in me as though they were bad, while my companions were enthusiastically unanimous in praising the good food. The man “continually discontent” is an unfortunate under the scourge of the invisible Powers, and it is with very good reason that people avoid him, for he is condemned to be a disturber of the peace, who, doomed to solitude and suffering, atones for secret misdoings.

Accordingly I go about alone, and when,

after not hearing my own voice for weeks at a time, I seek any one's company, I so overpower him with my loquacity that he is bored and retires, and involuntarily gives me to understand that he does not wish for another meeting. There are other moments when the longing to see a human being drives me into bad society. Then it happens that in the midst of conversation a feeling of discomfort, accompanied by headache, seizes me. I become dumb, unable to bring out another word. And I find myself compelled to leave the circle, who always show that they are glad to be rid of an intolerable person who had no business there.

Condemned to isolation, outlawed among men, I take refuge in the Lord, who for me has become a personal Friend. He is often angry with me, and then I suffer; often He seems absent, engaged with some one else, and then it is much worse. But when He is gracious, then my life is sweet, especially when I am alone. By a curious accident I have taken up my abode in the Rue Bonaparte, the Catholic street. I live exactly opposite the

École des Beaux Arts, and when I go out, I walk between rows of plateglass windows filled with Puvis de Chavanne's *Legends*, Botticelli's Madonnas, Raphael's Virgins, which accompany me to the upper part of the Rue Jacob, whence the Catholic bookshops with their prayer-books and missals follow me to the church St. Germain des Près. From that point the shops with their objects of devotion form a line of Saviours, Madonnas, Archangels, Demons, and Saints, all the fourteen stations of the Passion of Christ, and Christmas mangers on the right hand. On the left there is a series of devotional picture-books, rosaries, clerical vestments, and altar vessels, as far as the Saint Sulpice marketplace, where the four lions of the church, with Bossuet at their head, guard the noblest religious edifice in Paris. After I have passed observantly through this repertory of sacred history, I often enter the church in order to strengthen myself by looking at Eugene Delacroix's picture of Jacob wrestling with the angel. The fact is that this picture always sets me thinking, by rousing irreligious

ideas in me, in spite of the religious character of the subject. And when I pass out again, through the kneeling worshippers, I keep remembering the wrestler who holds himself upright although lamed in the sinew of his thigh. Afterwards I pass by the Seminary of the Jesuits, a kind of terrible Vatican, from which emanate floods of psychic force, whose effect may be felt from far, if one may believe the Theosophists. I have now reached my goal, the Garden of the Luxembourg. From the time of my first visit to Paris in 1876, this park has exercised a mysterious influence over me, and it was my day-dream to be able to live near it. This idea was realised in 1893, and from that time on, although with interruptions, this garden has become part of my recollections, and so to speak, of my personality. Although actually of moderate extent, it seems in my imagination of immeasurable size. It has twelve gates, just like the Holy City in the Book of Revelation, and in order to complete the resemblance, "On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates; on the south, three gates; on the west, three



gates" (Rev. xxi. 13). Every entrance gives me a different impression, derived from the arrangement of the plants, buildings, and statues, and perhaps also from personal reminiscences connected with them.

So I feel quite glad as I enter by the first gate after the Rue de Luxembourg as one comes from Saint Sulpice. The ivy-grown cottage of the gatekeeper, with a duckpond close by, seems like an unpublished idyll. Further on is the building containing pictures, by living artists, in clear bright colours. The thought that the friends of my youth, Karl Larsson, the sculptor Ville Vallgren, and Fritz Thaulow, have there deposited, so to speak, parts of their souls, strengthens and makes me feel younger, and I seem to feel the irradiation of their spirit pierce through the walls, and bid me take courage, since my friends are close by. Further on we have Eugene Delacroix, whose right to his laurels is questioned by contemporaries, and will be by posterity. The second gate of the pair which open on the Rue de Fleurus leads me to the racecourse,

which is as broad as a hippodrome, and ends with a flower-terrace where a marble Victory stands as a boundary pillar, and from which one sees in the distance the Pāntheon surmounted by a cross. The third gate forms the continuation of the Rue Vanneau, and leads me to a dusky alley which, on the left, merges itself into a sort of Elysian field where the children have chosen for themselves spots to play in and amuse themselves with wooden horses which go in pairs with lions, elephants, and camels, just as in Paradise; further on is the tennis ground, the children's theatre among flower-beds, the Golden Age, Noah's Ark. Here the springtime of life meets me in the autumn of my own.

On the south side, past the Rue d'Assas, the vegetable and nursery garden present a picture of midsummer; the blossoming time is over. It is the season of fruit, and the beehives close by, with their citizen-like inhabitants who collect gold dust for the winter, strengthen the impression of maturity which this part of the garden makes.

The second gate, immediately opposite the Lyceum "Louis le Grand," opens up a paradisaal prospect; velvet-like meadows with ever fresh green; here and there a rose bush and a single peach tree. I shall never forget how one spring this last, arrayed in its dawn-coloured blossoms, enticed me to spend a whole half-hour in contemplation, or rather in adoration, of its slim, youthful, virginal form.

The Observatory Avenue leads to the gate of the main entrance, which with its gilded "fasces" looks really majestic. But, as it is really too majestic for me, I generally remain standing outside—in the morning admiring the palace, in the evening the bright outline of Montmartre showing above the roofs, and in clear weather the Great Bear and the Polar Star circling above the great barred gate, which serves me in my astrological observations as a mural quadrant.

On the east side the only gate that attracts me is that which opens on the Rue Soufflot. From that point I discovered

my favourite garden, with the charming outlines of the giant plane trees, and in the blue distance hinting at mysteries, as I did not yet know the Rue de Fleurus, which later on became dear to me as the entrance to a new life. Thence I am accustomed to look back over the path I have traversed, which is interrupted on one side by the pool, and on the other by the little statue of David with the broken sword.

One morning in early autumn the fountain presented the spectacle of a rainbow, which reminded me of the dyer's shop in the Rue de Fleurus where "my rainbow" expanded as a sign of my covenant with the Eternal (vide *Inferno*\*). When I go on to the descent of the terrace I have to pass by the row of statues of women who were more or less queens or sinners, and I remain standing at the top of the great flight of stairs where, in springtime, a hedge of red hawthorn acts as a framework to the outspread panorama of flowers.

The last gate, that by the museum, makes

\* An earlier work by Strindberg.

a mixed impression, with the vulture that for no apparent cause has swooped down on the head of the Sphinx, and with Hero kissing Leander, overtaken by an early death, which might have been easily predicted. Passing it, I increase my topographical knowledge by skirting the gallery of contemporary paintings, and burying myself in the rose garden avenue with its thousands of roses.

This constitutes my morning walk, and I tune my mood to whatever pitch I like, according to the gate through which I enter. For my return route I use the Boulevard Saint Michel, and keep the top of the steeple of the Sainte Chapelle in sight. This serves as a cynosure to guide me between the vain attractions spread out in the shop windows and exhibited on the pavement in the shape of *filles de joie* and children of the world. Arrived at the Saint Michel market-place, I feel myself protected by the statue of the noble archangel who kills the dragon. The feeling that this emblem displays the spirit of evil is not

derived from its lizard-like tail, nor the ram's horns, nor the lifted eyebrows, but from its mouth, which does not close at the corners, while the lips are drawn forward so as to hide the four front teeth. The tusks cannot be hidden, and its hideous sidelong smile displays the deathless evil, which still grins contempt, with the spearpoint in its breast.

Three times in my life I have met this mouth, in an actor, a female painter, and another woman, and I have never been deceived in my feeling about it.

I have now reached the crowded opening of the Rue Bonaparte. This narrow road forms a discharge outlet for the Mont Parnasse quarter, Luxembourg, and part of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. One has to manœuvre skilfully to make one's way into the outflowing torrent, hemmed in as it is by foot-passengers and vehicles, while the firm ground is represented by a pavement a yard broad.

Meanwhile nothing makes me so nervous as these omnibuses drawn by three white

horses, because I have seen them in dreams, and, moreover, these white horses remind me, perhaps, of a certain "pale horse" mentioned in the Book of Revelation. Especially in the evening, when they follow one another three abreast with the red lantern suspended above, I imagine that they turn their heads towards me, look at me maliciously, and say, "Wait a little; we will soon have you."

In brief, this is my "vicious circle" which I traverse twice a day, and my life is so thoroughly enclosed in the frame of this circuit, that if I once take the liberty to go another way, I go wrong, as if I had lost fragments of myself, my recollections, my thoughts, and feelings of self-coherence.

\* \* \* \*

One Sunday afternoon in November I betook myself to the restaurant to eat alone. Two little tables are set out on the pavement of the Boulevard St. Germain, flanked by two green oleander pots, and shaded by two fibre-mats, which form an enclosure. The air is warm and still; the street lamps, which have

been lit, illuminate a vivid kinematographic picture, as omnibuses, chaises and cabs drive home from the parks, filled with holiday-makers in their best clothes, who sing, blow horns, and shout at the passers-by.

As I sit down to eat, both my friends, two cats, come and take their usual places on both sides of me, waiting till the meat appears. As I have not heard my own voice for weeks, I make them a short address without getting any answer. Condemned to this dumb and hungry companionship, because I have abandoned evil companionship where my ear was vexed by irreligious and coarse language, I feel rebellious against such injustice. For I abominate animals, cats as well as dogs, as it is my right to hate the animal within myself.

Why is it that Providence, which takes the trouble to educate me, always banishes me to evil companionship when good companionship would be more adapted to improve me by the power of example?

At this very moment there comes a black poodle with a red collar and drives my feline



friends away. After he has swallowed their portions, he makes his acknowledgments by defiling the foot of my seat, and then the ungrateful cynic takes up a sitting position on the asphalt and turns his back on me. From the frying-pan into the fire! It is no use complaining, for swine might come instead of him and offer me their society, as they did to Robert the Devil or Francis of Assissi. One can ask so little of life: So little! and yet it is too much for me.

A flower-seller offers me pinks. Why must it be pinks, which I dislike because they resemble raw flesh and smell of a chemist's shop? To please her I take a handful at my own price, and since it was a generous one, the old woman rewards me with a "God bless the gentleman for giving me such a fine *douceur* to-night!" Although I know the dodge, the blessing sounds pleasantly in my ears, for I have great need of one after so many curses.

About half-past eight the news-vendors cry *La Presse*, and that is a signal for me to go. If I remain sitting to eat some dessert,

and to drink an extra glass of wine, I am certain to be annoyed in some way or other, either by a troop of cocottes, who sit down exactly opposite me, or by roaming street urchins, who abuse me. There is no mistake about it; I am put upon diet, and if I take more than three courses and half a flask of wine, I am punished. After my first attempts to transgress the limits at meal-times have been frustrated in this way, I give up making any more, and finally find myself contented to be put on half rations. So I get up from table, in order to betake myself to the Rue Bonaparte and from thence up to the Luxembourg.

At the corner of the Rue Gozlin I buy cigarettes, and pass the "Gold Pheasant" restaurant. At the corner of the Rue du Four I pause by a strikingly realistic picture of Christ. The spiritually minded artists during their campaign against the Zola-literature have not been able to avoid the contagion of realism, and with the help of one devil seek to drive out another. It is impossible to pass such pictures without

pausing to contemplate them, drawn as they are after living models and painted with the glaring colours of the impressionists.

The shop is closed and veiled in shadow, and the Redeemer stands there in His royal robe lit by the street lamp, showing His bleeding heart and head crowned with thorns. For more than a year I have been persecuted and followed by the Redeemer, whom I do not understand and whose help I should like to dispense with by bearing my own cross if possible. This is due to a remnant of manly pride which finds something repulsive in the cowardice of casting one's sins on the shoulders of the innocent.

I have seen the Crucified everywhere—in the toy shops, at the picture dealers', at the Art Exhibitions particularly, in the theatre, and in literature. I have seen Him on the cover of my cushion, in the burning logs in the oven, in the snow over there in Sweden, on the coast cliffs of Normandy. Is He preparing for His return, or has He arrived? What does He want? Here in the shop window in the Rue Bonaparte He

is no longer the Crucified. He comes from heaven as Victor, adorned with gold and jewels. Is He the "Good Tyrant" which youth dreams of, a Prince of Peace, a glorious hero?

He has cast away His cross and resumed His sceptre, and, as soon as His temple on the Mont de Mars (formerly called "Mount of Martyrs") is ready, He will come and rule the world Himself, and hurl from the throne the false usurper, who finds the eleven thousand rooms known as the *infamia Vaticani loca* too narrow for him, laments over his luxurious imprisonment, and kills the time with small excursions into the field of poetry.

Leaving the picture of the Redeemer, as I arrived at the Saint Sulpice market, I am astonished to find that the Church seems removed to a great distance. It has gone back at least half a mile, and the fountains proportionably. Have I then lost the sense for distances? As I pass along the seminary wall it seems as though it would never end, so interminable does it appear this evening.

I spend half an hour in traversing this small-portion of the Rue Bonaparte, which generally takes only five minutes. And before me there walks a figure, whose gait and manner remind me of some one whom I know. I quicken my steps, I run, but the Unknown presses forward with exactly corresponding celerity, so that I never succeed in shortening the distance between us. At last I have reached the trellis-gate of the Luxembourg. The garden which was closed at sunset, is sunk in silence and solitude, the trees are bare, and the border-beds laid waste by frost and autumn storms. But there is a good wholesome smell of dry leaves and fresh earth.

Following the enclosing wall I go up the Rue de Luxembourg, and always see in front of me the Unknown, who begins to interest me. Clad in a traveller's mantle, which resembles mine, but is of opaline whiteness, slight and tall like myself, he goes forward when I do, remains standing when I remain standing, so that it seems as if I were his guide and he depended on my movements.

But one circumstance particularly draws my attention to him, viz. that his mantle flutters in a strong breeze which is quite imperceptible to me. In order to clear up the matter I light a cigar, and as I perceive the smoke rise steadily upward without wavering, my conviction that there is no air-current is strengthened. Moreover, the trees and bushes in the garden are motionless. After we have reached the Rue Vavin I turn off to the right, and at the same moment find myself transported from the pavement to the middle of the garden without understanding how it has happened, as the gates are closed.

Before me, at a distance of twenty steps, stands my companion turned towards me. Round his beardless face of dazzling whiteness spreads a luminous ring in the shape of an ellipse with the Unknown in the centre. After he has given me a sign to follow him, he goes further. The crown of rays accompanies him, so that the gloomy, cold, and squalid garden is lit up as he goes. Moreover the trees, the bushes, the plants

grow green and blossom just as far as the rays of his halo reach, but fade again when he has passed. I recognise the great flowering canes with leaves like elephant's ears hanging over the statuary group of Adam and his family, also the bed of *Salvia fulgens*, the fire-red sage, the peach tree, the roses, the banana plants, the aloes, — all my old acquaintances, each in his own place. The only strange thing is that the seasons of the year seem to be mingled together, so that the spring and autumn flowers are blooming simultaneously.

But what surprises me more than anything is that nothing of all this seems strange to me; it all appears quite natural and inevitable. So as I walk along the bee-garden, a swarm of bees buzzes about the plants and settles on the flowers, but in such an exactly defined circle that the insects disappear as soon as they fly into the shadow. The illuminated part of a sage-plant is covered with leaves and blossoms, while the part in shadow is withered and blighted with hoar frost.

Under the chestnut trees there is a fascinatingly beautiful sight, as, under the foliage, an empty dove's nest is suddenly taken possession of by a cooing pair of doves.

• At last we have reached the Fleurus Gate, and my guide signs to me to remain standing. Within a second he is at the other end of the garden, at the Gay-Lussac Gate, at a distance which appears to me immense, although it is only about a quarter of a mile. In spite of the distance I can see the Unknown surrounded by his oval halo. Without speaking a word or moving a muscle of his mouth he bids me approach. I seem to divine his purpose as I traverse the long avenue, the racecourse well known to me for years bounded at the end by the cross of the Pantheon, which stands in blood-red relief against the dark sky.

The Way of the Cross and, perhaps, the fourteen Stations, if I am not mistaken. Before I begin it, I make a sign that I wish to speak, question, and receive explanation. My guide answers with an inclination



of the head that he is ready to hear what I have to say. At the same moment the Unknown changes his position without the slightest perceptible movement or rustle. The only thing I notice is, that as he approaches me the air is filled with a perfume as of balsam, which makes my heart and lungs swell, and gives me courage to dare the contest.

I commence my questioning—

“Thou art he who has followed me for two years. What would'st thou of me?”

Without opening his mouth the Unknown answered me with a kind of smile full of super-human kindness, forbearance, and urbanity,—

“Why dost thou ask me since thou knowest the answer thyself?”

And, as if within me, I hear thy voice sound again, “I wish to raise thee to a higher life, to lift thee out of the mire.”

“Born as I am out of mire, created for baseness, feeding on decay, how shall I be freed from earthly grossness except by death? Take my life then! Thou wilt not? It must be the infliction of punishment which

is to educate me? But let me assure thee that humiliations make me proud; being denied the little enjoyments of life produces desire for them; fasting occasions gluttony, which is not my besetting sin; chastity whets the edge of lust; enforced loneliness produces love of the world and its unwholesome delights; poverty gives birth to greed; and the evil companionship to which I am relegated instils contempt of humanity into me, and produces unawares the suspicion that justice is maladministered. Yes, at certain moments it seems to me as though Providence was not kept sufficiently informed by its satraps to whom it has intrusted the rule over mankind; that its prefects and sub-prefects allow themselves to be guilty of malversations, falsifications, baseless denunciations. Thus it has happened to me, that I have been punished where others have sinned; suits have been brought against me, in which I was not only innocent, but actually the defender of right and the accuser of crime. All the same the punishment has lighted on me while the guilty triumphed.

“Allow me a plain question : Have women been admitted to a share in the rule? For the present method of government seems so irritable, so petty, so unjust, yes,—unjust. Is it not the case that every time when I have brought a righteous and lawful case against a woman, she, however unworthy she may have been, has been acquitted, and I have been condemned?

“Thou wilt not answer? And then thou demandest from me that I should love criminals, soul-murderers who poison the mind and falsify truth, and perjurers! No, a thousand times no! ‘O Eternal! should I not hate them that hate thee? Should I not abhor them that rise up against thee. I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them mine enemies.’ So speaks the Psalmist, and I add, ‘I hate the wicked as I hate myself’; and my prayer is this, ‘Punish, O Lord, those who persecute me with lies and malice as Thou hast punished me when I was false and malicious! Have I now blasphemed the Eternal, the Father of Jesus Christ, the God of the Old and New Testa-

ment? Of old time He listened to the reproaches of mortals, and permitted the accused to defend themselves. Listen to the way in which Moses defended himself before the Lord when the Israelites were tired of the manna, "Wherefore hast Thou afflicted Thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in Thy sight, that Thou layest the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that Thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which Thou swarest unto their fathers? Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying Give us flesh, that we may eat. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me."

"Is not this plain speaking on the part of a mortal? Is it quite befitting, this speech of an angry servant? Yet consider, the Lord does not smite the bold speaker with a thunderbolt, but lightens his load by choos-

ing seventy leaders to share the burden of the people with Moses. The way in which the Eternal grants the prayer of the people when they clamour for flesh to eat, is only slightly contemptuous, like that of a kindly father when he grants the wishes of his unreasonable children. 'Therefore the Lord will give you flesh and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days nor twenty days, but even a whole month, until it come out at your nostrils, and it be loathsome to you.'

"That is a God after my ideal, the same God to whom Job cries, 'Oh that one might plead with God as a man pleadeth with his friend.' But without waiting for this, the sufferer takes the liberty of demanding explanations from the Lord regarding the evil treatment to which he is exposed. 'I will say to God, "~~Condemn me~~ not; show me wherefore Thou goest against me in judgment. Doth it please Thee to oppress me, to overthrow the work of Thine own hands, and to further the devices of the wicked?"' These are reproaches and

imputations which the good God accepts without anger, and which He answers without using thunderbolts. Where is He, the Heavenly Father, who can smite at the follies of His children and pardon after He has punished them? Where does He hide Himself, the Master of the house who kept it in good order, and watched the overseers in order to prevent injustice?"

During my disconnected speech the Unknown regarded me with the same indulgent smile, without betraying impatience. But when I had finished, he disappeared. I found myself breathing a stifling atmosphere of carbonic oxide, and standing alone on the gloomy, dirty, autumnal-looking Rue Medici. While I went down the Boulevard Saint Michel I felt vexed with myself, that I had neglected the opportunity of speaking out everything. I had still many shafts in my quiver, if only the Unknown had waited to answer, or to direct an accusation against me.

But as soon as the crowd again presses round me in the glaring light of the gas

lamps, and all the exposed wares in the shops remind me of the trivialities of life, the scene in the garden appears like a miracle, and I hasten in alarm to my lodging, where meditation plunges me into an abyss of doubt and anxiety. There is a ferment going on in the world, and men are waiting for something new, of which a glimmering has already appeared. France is preparing for a return to the Middle Ages,—the period of faith and of dogma, to which it has been led over the downfall of an empire, and of a miniature Augustus, just as at the time of the decay of the power of Rome and the invasion of the barbarians: One has seen Paris—Rome in flames, and the Goths crowning themselves in the capitol, Versailles. The great heathen Taine and Renan have gone down to perdition, and taken their scepticism with them, but Joan of Arc has again woken to life. The Christians are persecuted, their processions dispersed by *gens d'armes*; saturnalias are held on carnival days, and shameful orgies take place in the open streets under the protection of the police, and with the aid of

money grants from the Government, which to satisfy the discontented offers shows, with or without gladiatorial encounters. "*Panem et Circenses*" (Dear)—bread and games. All is readily bought with money, honour, conscience, fatherland, love, administration of justice, — truly the infallible and regular symptoms of decay in a community, whence Virtue, both in name and reality, has been banished for thirty years. Yet for all that we are in the Middle Ages. Young men assume monkish cowls, wear the tonsure and dream of convent life. They compose legends and perform miracle-plays, paint Madonnas and carve images of Christ, drawing their inspiration from the magician\* who has bewitched them with Tristran and Tseult, Parzival and the Holy Grail. Crusades against Jews and Turks begin afresh; the Anti-Semites and Phil-hellenes see to that. Magic and alchemy have already been re-established,\* and they only wait for the first proved case of witchcraft in order to erect a funeral pile to burn witches on. Middle

\* Wagner.



Ages indeed ! Witness the pilgrimages to Lourdes, Tilli-sur-Seine, Rue Jean Goujon. Heaven also gives the sleepy world signs to be ready. The Lord speaks through water-spouts, cyclones, floods, and thunder-storms.

Medieval also is the leprosy which has just appeared again, and against which the doctors of Paris and Berlin have combined.

But they were beautiful, the Middle Ages, when men knew how to enjoy and to suffer, when strength and love and beauty in colour, in line, and harmony were revealed for the last time, before they were drowned and sabred by the renaissance of heathenism which is called Protestantism.

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The evening has come, and I burn with desire to renew my meeting with the Unknown, well prepared, as I now am, to confess all and to defend myself before I am condemned. After I have taken my melancholy meal alone I go up the Via Dolorosa, the Rue Bonaparte. This street has never appeared to me so monstrous as this evening ; the

shop windows yawn like abysses in which Christ is portrayed in many forms—half-martyred, half-triumphant. I go on and on, while the sweat runs in great drops down my face, and the soles of my boots burn my feet, yet I do not seem to advance a step. Am I the Wandering Jew who refused the Redeemer a drink of water? and am I, now that I wish to follow and imitate Him, unable to approach Him?

Finally, and without myself knowing how, I find myself before the Fleurus Gate, and in the next moment within the garden, which lies there, dark, damp, and still. Immediately a gust of wind sets the skeletons of the trees in motion, and the Unknown takes up his position quicker as he approaches in his summer-like garment of light. With the same smile as before he invites me to speak.

And I speak, "What demandest thou of me, and wherefore plaguest thou me with thy Christ? A few days ago in some mysterious manner thou placedst the *Imitation of Christ* in my hand, and I read it as in my youth when I learned to despise the world. How

can I have the right to despise the creation of the Eternal and the beautiful earth? And whither has thy wisdom led me? To neglect my affairs, till I have become a burden for my fellow-men, and ended as a beggar. This book, which forbids friendship, which lays worldly intercourse under a ban, which demands solitude and renunciation, is written for a monk, and I have not the right to be a monk and expose myself to the danger of letting my children die of want. See whither the love for a lonely life has led me. On the one hand thou enjoimest the life of a hermit, and as soon as I withdraw myself from the world I am attacked by the evil spirits of madness, my affairs fall into confusion, and in my isolation I do not possess a single friend from whom I can ask help. On the other hand, as soon as I seek out men, I meet the worst kind, who annoy me with their arrogance, and that in proportion to my humility. For I am humble, and treat all as my equals, till they trample me under their feet, when I behave like a worm which raises its head but cannot bite.

“What then demandest thou of me? Is it to make me a martyr at all costs, whether I do thy will or disregard it? Wilt thou make me a prophet? That is too great an honour for me, and I lack the vocation to be one. Besides I cannot take up that attitude, for all prophets which I have known have been finally unmasked as half-charlatans, half-lunatics, and their prophecies have always failed.

“Moreover, if thou pressest upon me this vocation, I must be favoured with electing grace, so that I become free from all destructive passions which are degrading for a preacher; I must have adequate support for my life instead of being, as I am, besmirched with poverty, which makes one's character deteriorate and ties one's hands. It is certainly true, and I grant it, that contempt of the world has led me to despise myself and to neglect my calling through undervaluing honour. I confess that I have been a sorry guardian of my own person, but that is because of the superiority of my better self which despised the unclean sheath in which thou hast immured my immortal soul. From

my earliest years I have loved purity and virtue — verily I have. Yet my life has dragged itself along in filth and wickedness, so that I often suppose my sins to be punishments inflicted upon me, with the object of arousing in me a permanent disgust of life. Why hast thou condemned me to ingratitude, which I hate more than any other sin? Thou hast entangled me, who am naturally grateful, in snares, in order to compel me to feel obligation to the first benefactor who came in my way. So I have become involved in dependence and slavery, since benefactors demand as compensation control over the thoughts, wishes, inclinations, and devotion, —in a word, the whole soul, of those whom they benefit. Always I have been compelled to withdraw myself, laden with debt and ungrateful, in order to preserve my individuality and manly worth; I have been forced to tear asunder the bonds which threatened to strangle my immortal soul. And that, too, with the spiritual torment and pangs of conscience of a thief who goes his way with some one else's property.

“As a matter of fact, by choosing the royal road of the Cross I have entangled myself in the thorny thicket of theology, so that doubts more terrible than ever have taken possession of me, and whispered plainly in my ear that all unhappiness, all injustice, and the whole work of redemption is only an enormous temptation which one must manfully resist. Often I believe that Swedenborg, with his terrifying hells, is only a fire and water-ordeal which must be undergone. And although I owe a debt of gratitude, which I cannot pay to this prophet, who has saved me from madness, I feel rise again and again in my heart a burning desire to overthrow him, to defy him as an evil spirit who always plots to ensnare my soul in order to enslave me, after he has driven me to despair and suicide. Yes, he has insinuated himself between me and my God, whose place he has wished to take. It is he who tyrannises over me with terrors of the night and threatens me with madness. Though possibly he has only fulfilled his task in drawing me back to the Lord and making me submit

to the Eternal. It may be that his hells are only a scarecrow; I take them as such, but believe no more in them, for I cannot believe in them without slandering the good God who demands that we should forgive, because He can Himself forgive. If the unhappiness and trouble I meet with are not punishments, then they are initial tests. I am inclined to explain them in this way, and it is likely that Christ is the Example, because He has suffered much, although I do not understand what end such great sufferings serve, except to throw into relief future blessedness. I have said what I had to say. Give me now an answer." . .

But the Unknown, who had listened with wonderful patience, answered only with a gesture of gentle irony, and vanished.

When I found myself back in the street, I was, as usual, angry at having forgotten the best arguments, which always turn up when it is too late. A whole long speech presents itself to me now, while my heart swells and my courage rises again. The awe-inspiring and sympathetic Unknown has, at any rate,

heard me without crushing me. He has also waited to hear my grounds of complaint, and he will now consider the injustice to which I have been a sacrifice. Perhaps I have succeeded in convincing him, as he stood there and did not answer me.

The old idea that I am Job comes into my mind, I have really lost my property; they have taken my movable goods and books, means of existence, wife, and children. Hunted from one land to another, I am condemned to a lonely life in the desert. Is it I who have written these lamentations, or is it Job: "My neighbours have forsaken me, and my friends have forgotten me. My wife makes herself strange to me, and my prayers reach not the sons of my mother. Little children also despise me. He has made me a by-word among the people, and I have become their music. I find only slanderers, and my eye wakes the whole night while they persecute my soul. My skin breaks and is dissolved. When I say, 'My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint,' then thou scarest me with dreams,



and terrified me through visions." This fits me exactly; the cracks in the skin, the dreams and the visions. But there is an overplus on my side. I have endured the extremest sufferings, as circumstances brought about by invisible powers which hemmed me in, in order to compel me to leave unfulfilled the simplest duty of a man,—to support his children. Job retired from the game with his honour unaffected; for me all was lost, even honour, and yet I overcame the temptation to suicide; I possessed the courage to live without honour.

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For three months I seek in vain to come into personal connection with the Swedenborg Society in Paris. For a whole week I go every morning past the Pantheon to reach the Rue Thouin, where the chapel and the library of the Swedish prophet are situated. Finally I find some one who says that the librarian only receives strangers in the afternoon, just the time when I wish to be alone with my thoughts, and am too tired to walk. However, time after time I make the attempt

to reach the Rue Thouin. The first time I felt uncomfortably depressed as I went out, and at the end of the bridge of Saint Michel this feeling amounted to a positive fear, which compelled me to return home. A second time it is Sunday, and they are going to have service in the Swedenborgian chapel. I arrive an hour too soon, and do not feel strong enough to wait an hour in the street. The third time I find the pavement taken up in the Rue Thouin, and workman blocking the way with their planks and tools. Then I conclude that Swedenborg is not destined to be my leader on the right path, and under this impression I retrace my steps. But when I get home, it occurs to me that I have allowed myself to be deceived by Swedenborg's invisible enemies, and that I must fight them.

My last attempt I make in a carriage. This time the street is barricaded, as it expressly to frustrate my purpose. I get out of the carriage and clamber over the obstructions, but when I reach the door of the Swedenborgian chapel I find the pavement and steps have been taken away. In spite of

all I manage to reach the door, pull the bell, and am told by a stranger that the librarian is ill.

With a kind of feeling of relief I turn my back on the gloomy, shabby little chapel with its dark window panes soiled with rain and dust. This edifice, built in the severe barbaric depressing Methodist style, had always repelled me. Its want of beauty reminded me of the Protestantism of the north, and it cost my pride a struggle to bring myself to seek to enter it. I did it as a pious duty towards Swedenborg, nothing more.

As I turned round with a light heart, I saw on the pavement a tin-coated piece of iron, in the shape of a clover-leaf, and superstitiously picked it up. Simultaneously a recollection sprang to life in my mind. The year before, on the 2nd November in the terrible year 1896, as I was walking one morning in Klam in Austria, the sun disappeared behind a wall of cloud shaped like an arch, with clover-shaped outlines surrounded by blue and white rays. This cloud and my tinned iron-plate resembled each other as closely as two drops

of water. My diary, in which I made a sketch of the former, can verify this fact.

What does that signify? The Trinity, that is clear. And further?—

I leave the Rue Thouin, joyful as a school-boy who has escaped a hard task because the teacher is ill. As I pass by the Pantheon, I find the great gate wide open in a sort of challenging way, as if to say, “Come in!” As a matter of fact, in spite of my long residence in Paris I have never visited this church, chiefly because people have told me lies about the wall-paintings, and said that they dealt with certain modern subjects which I strongly dislike. One may imagine my delight as I enter and find myself in a shower of radiance falling from the central dome, and surrounded by a golden legend—the sacred history of France, which closes immediately before the time of Protestantism. The ambiguous inscription without—“*Aux grand. hommes,*” had also misled me. There are few kings, still fewer generals, and not a single deputy; I breathe again. On the other hand, there are St. Denis, St. Geneviève, St. Louis, Joan of

Arc. Never would I have believed that the Republic was Catholic to such a degree. There is only wanting the Altar and Tabernacle. In place of the Crucified and the Virgin is the statue of a woman of the world, set up here by women who admire her; but I comfort myself with the thought that this celebrity will finally descend to the gutter like so many more honoured ones have done before. It is pleasant and interesting to roam about this temple which is dedicated to sanctity, but it is sad to see at the same time how the virtuous and benevolent have been beheaded. Must one not out of reverence to God believe that all the evil treatment which has fallen to the lot of the just and merciful is only an apparent wrong, and that, however discouraging the path of virtue may appear, it leads to some good end, which is hidden from our view? Otherwise these infernal stakes and scaffolds, where executioners triumph over saints, must suggest blasphemous thoughts regarding the goodness of the supreme Judge who only seems to hate and persecute the saints below, in order to reward them in a

higher world. "Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy." Meanwhile, as I leave the Pantheon, I cast a look at the Rue Thouin and wonder that the road to Swedenborg has led me to the Church of St. Geneviève. Swedenborg, my guide and prophet, has hindered me from going to his modest chapel. Has he then rejected himself and become better instructed, so that he has been converted to Catholicism. While I studied the works of the Swedish seer, it has struck me how he sets himself up as an opponent to Luther, who valued faith alone. In fact, Swedenborg is more Catholic than he has wished to appear, since he preaches faith in conjunction with works, just like the Catholic Church.

If it is so, then he is at war with himself, and I, his disciple, will be crushed between anvil and hammer.

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One evening, after a day filled with pangs of conscience and doubts, I betook myself, after I had taken my lonely midday meal, to the garden which draws me like a Gethsemane

where unknown sufferings await me. I have a foreboding of torments, and cannot escape them; I long for them almost as a wounded man wishes to subject himself to a cruel operation, which will bring him cure or death. Reaching the Fleurus Gate, I find myself at once upon the racecourse which is terminated by the Pantheon surmounted by the Cross. Two years ago this temple signified to my worldly mind the honour paid to "great men," now I look upon it as dedicated to the martyrs and the sufferings which they have endured; so greatly has my point of view changed. The fact that the Unknown remains absent causes me to feel an oppression of the chest. Lonely, and prepared for controversy, I feel myself weary for want of a visible opponent. To fight with phantoms and shadows is worse than to contend with dragons and lions. Terror seizes me, and urged on by the courage of the coward, I go forward with firm steps on the slippery ground between the plane trees. A close smell of dirty cod-fish mixed with that of tar and tallow chokes me; I hear the slapping of

waves against the sides of ships and the quay ; I am led into the courtyard of a yellow brick building ; I mount upstairs, traverse enormous halls and countless galleries, passing between showcases and glass cabinets full of animals stuffed or preserved in tins. Finally, an open door invites me into a hall of strange appearance ; it is dark, but faintly illuminated by patches of light reflected from a number of coins and medals in well-arranged showcases. I stop before a glass-covered case near a window, and my eye is attracted among the gold and silver medals by one of another metal, which is as dark as lead. It bears the picture of myself, the type of an "ambitious criminal with hollow cheeks, hair erect, and an ugly mouth. The reverse of the medal bears the inscription, "Truth is always ruthless."\* Oh ! Truth ! which is so veiled from mortals, and which I was bold enough to believe I had unveiled, when I despised the Holy Communion, the miracle of which I now

\* Strindberg had been prosecuted for assailing the doctrine of the Holy Communion ; he was acquitted, and the medal in question seems to have been struck on the occasion.



recognise. The medal is a godless memorial to the dishonour of the godlessness of blasphemous friends. It is true I have always been ashamed of this glorification of brutality, and not taken the trouble to keep this memorial. I have thrown it to the children to play with, and it has disappeared without my missing it. Similarly, by a fateful "coincidence," the artist who made the medal, went out of his mind soon afterwards, having deceived his publisher and committed forgery. Oh, this disgrace, which cannot be wiped out, but must for ever be preserved in memory, as the law orders this indictment to be kept in the State museum! Here one sees what "honour" comes to! But what have I to complain of, since Providence has only granted fulfilment to an unholy prayer which I addressed to it in my youth?

I was about fifteen years old when, weary of useless conflicts against the young hot blood that longed to satisfy its passions, exhausted by the religious doubts which devastated my soul, which was eager to solve the riddle of existence, surrounded by pietists

who worried me under the plea of winning my soul to love the God-like, I roundly asserted to an old lady friend who had lectured me to death, "I pitch morality overboard, provided I can be a great genius and universally admired!"

I was, moreover, strengthened in my views by Thomas Henry Buckle, who taught us that morality was "a nothing," incapable of development, and that intelligence was everything. Later on, when I was twenty, I learnt from Taine that evil and good were indifferent matters, possessed of unconscious and irresponsible qualities, like the acidity of acids, and the alkalinity of alkalis. And this phrase, which was quickly caught up and developed by George Brandes, has stamped an impress of immorality on Scandinavian literature. A sophism, that is a weak syllogism which has missed the mark, has seduced a whole generation of freethinkers.

Weak indeed it is! For if we analyse Buckle's epigram, "Morality is incapable of development, and therefore does not matter," it is easy to discover that the inference should rather be, "Morality, which remains invariably

the same, thereby proves her divine and everlasting origin."

When my wish was finally attained, I became an acknowledged and admired genius, and the most despised of all men born in my country in this century. Banished from the better circles, neglected by the smallest of the small, disavowed by my friends, I received the visits of my admirers by night, or in secret. Yes, all do homage to morality, and a minority reverence talent, a fact which gives rise to various reflections concerning the essence of morality.

Still worse is the reverse of the medal! Truth! As though I had never given myself over to the power of falsehood, in spite of my pretence to be more truthful and sincere than others. I do not dwell on the petty falsehoods of childhood, which signify so little, occasioned as they mostly were by fear or the incapacity of distinguishing between fact and imagination, and because they were counterbalanced by punishments unjustly inflicted and based upon false accusations of my schoolfellows. But there are other falsehoods, and more serious

ones because of the injurious consequences which evil example and excuse for grievous wrongdoing involve. For example, the untrue description in my autobiography, "The Son of a Servant," with regard to the crisis of puberty. When I wrote that youthful confession, the liberal tendency of that period seems to have induced me to use too bright colours with the pardonable object of freeing from fear young men who have fallen into precocious sin.

As I bring these bitter reflections to a close, the coin-cabinet contracts, the medal retreats to a distance, and diminishes to the size of a lead button,—and I see myself in a dormitory in a school for boys in the country on the bank of the Malar in 1861. Children born of unlawful unions, children of parents who had fled from their country, badly brought-up children who in too many families were in the way, live here together huddled in a loft, without oversight, tyrannising over and ill-treating each other, in order to revenge themselves for the cruelty of life. A hungry herd of little evil-doers, ill-clothed and ill-

nourished, a terror to the country people and especially to the gardeners.

Pains of conscience follow immediately on a fall, and I see myself in the twilight of a summer evening sitting at a table in my night-dress with a prayer-book before me, stung by conscience and shame, although wholly unacquainted with the nature of sin. Innocent because I was ignorant, and yet a criminal. Led astray, and afterwards leading others astray, suffering remorse and relapsing, doubting the justice of my accusing conscience, and doubting the mercy of God who allows an innocent child to be exposed to the most terrible temptations. Unhappy victim without strength to stand first in the unequal strife with all-powerful Nature! Meanwhile the infernal fire is lit which will burn till the grave.

I burn with desire to accuse myself and to defend myself at the same time, but there is no judgment-seat and no judge, and I devour myself here in solitude.

As I cried out in my despair towards all quarters of heaven, I became enveloped in a dark mist, and when I began to see again

clearly I found myself standing in the Fleurus Avenue with my head leant against a chestnut tree. It was the third tree counting from the entrance gate, and the avenue has forty-seven on each side. Nine seats are placed between the trees to rest on. Thus there are forty-four halting places for me before I reach the first Station.

For a moment I remain quite depressed, watching the path of tears stretch before me. Suddenly under the leafless trees a ball of light approaches, borne along by two birds' wings. It stops before me on a level with my eyes, and in the clear light which the ball radiates I see a white sheet of paper ornamented like a menu-card. At the top I read in smoke-coloured letters, "Eat!" Then in a second the record of my whole past life is enrolled like a micrographic reproduction on an enormous placard. Everything is there! All the horrors, the most secret sins, the most loathsome scenes in which I have played the chief part. Alas! I could die with shame as I see those scenes depicted, which my eye, which seems to

grow in size, takes in at once, without needing to read and interpret them.

I do not die, however. On the contrary, for a minute which is forty-eight years long, I review my whole life from early childhood to this day. My bones are dried up to the marrow, my blood ceases to circulate, and, consumed by fiery pangs of conscience, I fall to the ground with the cry, "Mercy! Mercy! I must cease to justify myself before the Eternal, and I must cease to accuse my neighbours."

When consciousness returned I found myself on the Rue de Luxembourg, and as I looked through the trellis-gate I saw the garden blooming, while a choir of little mocking-birds greeted me from the bushes and trees.

The next evening there was a knock at my door about six o'clock, and there stepped in the American painter whom, in my book *Inferno*, I have identified with Francis Schlatter. As we had parted from each other quite indifferently, without friendship or enmity, our meeting was quite cordial.

I notice that the man is somewhat altered. He seems physically smaller than I remember him, and I cannot get him as before to smile at the vexations of life and at sorrows already endured, which are so easily borne when they are happily over. But he treats me with a surprising respect which contrasts strongly with his former camaraderie. Meanwhile this meeting rouses me from my lethargy, partly because I have some one to speak to who understands every word I say, partly because he forms a link with a period when the development of my life, belief, and growth was strongest. I feel as if the clock had been put back two years, and feel a wish to get free, to spend half a night on the Boulevard pavement in talk, with our glasses before us.

We agree to have our lunch at Montmartre, and take that direction. The noise of the street somewhat interrupts the current of conversation, and I notice in myself an unusual difficulty in hearing and understanding his words.

At the entrance to the Avenue de l'Opéra the crowd is great, and we are constantly



separated by those who meet us. It happens, that a man carrying some cotton wool stumbles against my companion so that he is covered over with white. With my head full of Swedenborg's symbols, I try to remember what this should signify, but can only think of the opening of the grave at St. Helena, when Napoleon's body looked as though it were covered with white down.

In the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin I am already so tired and nervous that we resolve to take a carriage. Since it is dinner-time the street is very full, and when we have driven for some minutes the carriage suddenly stands still. Simultaneously I receive such a blow in the back that I rise from my seat, and as I turn round there are three horses' heads opposite me,—an omnibus with a shouting driver on the top of it. This puts me out of humour, and I ask myself if it is intended for a warning.

We alight at the Place Pigalle and dine. Here I am reminded of my residence in Paris in the seventies, when I was young, but it makes me sad, for the changes are

great. My lodging-house in the Rue Douai is no more. The "Black Cat" which stood there then is closed, and Rodolphe Salis has been buried this year. The "Café de l'Ermitage" is only a recollection, and the "Tambourin" has changed its name and title. The friends of those days are dead, married, scattered, and the Swedish colony has transferred its quarters to Mont Parnasse. I feel that I have grown old.

The dinner is not so lively as I expected. The wine is of the bad kind that puts one out of humour. My having got out of the habit of listening and speaking makes the conversation disjointed and exhausting. The hope of recovering our former cheerful mood with the coffee is not realised, and soon that terrible silence begins which betrays a desire to get away from each other.

For a long while we struggle against the growing embarrassment, but in vain. As early as nine o'clock we rise from table, and my companion, guessing my mood, takes his own way, under the pretext of having an appointment to keep. As soon as I am

alone I feel an indescribable relief; my discomfort ceases, my headache disappears, and I feel as though the convolutions of my brain, and the net-work of my nerves which had become entangled, were slowly returning to their normal state. In truth, solitude has made my personality so sensitive that I cannot bear the contact of a stranger.

Quietly, but with an illusion the less, I return home, glad to be in my cell again; but I notice that the room has undergone a change; it is no longer the same, and a sort of domestic discomfort seems to pervade it. The furniture and small articles are in their places, but give a strange impression. Some one has been here and left traces of himself behind. I am undone!

The next day I go out to seek for society, but find none. The third day I go by appointment to my friend the artist to see his etchings. He lives in Marais. I ask the porter whether he is at home. "Yes," he answered, "but he is in the café, with a lady." Since I have nothing to say to the lady I go away again. The next day

I go again to Marais, and since he is at home I proceed to mount the six flights of stairs, which wind narrowly like stairs in a tower. When I have ascended three I begin to remember a dream and a reality. The dream which is often repeated has to do with just such narrow cork-screw stairs up which I crawl till I am stifled, as they grow ever narrower. The first time I remembered this dream was in the tower at Putbus, and I immediately went down again. Now I stand here squeezed, panting, my heart palpitating, but determine to ascend. I manage to get up, enter the studio, and find my friend with a lady. After I have sat for five minutes I get a severe headache and say, "My good friend, it seems as though I must renounce your society, for your stairs kill me. Just now I have a distinct conviction that if I come up here again I shall die."

He answered, "But you lately ascended the Montmartre and the stairs at the church of the "Sacred Heart."

"Yes," I reply, "it is very strange."

“Well,” he said, “then I will come to you, and we will dine in the evening together.”

So the next day we actually have our meal together, and fall into the pleasant mood which is desirable at such times. We treat each other with respect, avoid saying unpleasant things, put ourselves at each other's point of view, and obtain the illusion of being of one mind in all matters. After our meal, since the evening is mild, we continue our conversation, and cross the river, proceeding to the Boulevards till we finally reach the Café du Cardinal. It is now midnight, but we are far from being tired, and now begin those wonderful hours when the soul gets free from her wrappings, and the spiritual faculties, which would ordinarily be employed in dreaming, are roused to waking, and clear conceptions and keen glances into the past and future. During these night hours, my spirit seems to hover over and outside my body, which sits there like a stranger. Our drinking is merely a secondary matter which serves to keep sleep away, perhaps also to open the flood-gates of memory whence all

the occurrences of my life flow forth, so that at every moment I can call up facts, dates, years, scenes, and pictures. That is the attraction and power of vinous excitement over me, but a religious-minded occultist has told me that it is a sin, for it is wrongfully antedating salvation, which consists in the liberation of the soul from matter. Therefore this trespass is punished with terrible subsequent tortures.

Meanwhile they begin to disturb us by giving signs of closing the Boulevard cafés, but as I do not want to finish, I name the word "Baratte," and my friend is ready at once. Café Baratte, near the "Halls," has always had a wonderful attraction for me, without my exactly knowing why. It may be the proximity of the "Halls." When it is night on the Boulevard, it is morning in them—all through the night in fact—which with its enforced want of occupation and dark dreams is banished. The mind which has become intoxicated in immaterial worlds descends to eating, sin, and noise. This scent of fish, flesh, and vegetables, over the

refuse of which we step, seems to me an effective contrast to the lofty themes which we have just been discussing.

That is the stuff out of which we are created and re-created three times a day, and when one enters from the darkness, dirt, and knots of seedy figures outside, into the comfortable café, one is greeted by light, warmth, song, mandolines, and guitars. At this hour of the day all class distinctions are wiped out. Here sit artists, students, authors, drinking at long tables, and in a sort of waking trance. Or have they fled from the sad sleep which, perhaps, has ceased to visit them? There is no sparkling hilarity, but a kind of stupor broods over the whole, and it seems to me as if I had entered into a realm of shadows peopled by half-real phantoms.

I know an author who used to sit there at night and write. I have seen strangers there dressed as though they came from a brilliant supper at Parc Monceau. I have seen a public man, with the appearance of a foreign ambassador, stand up and sing a solo. I have seen people who looked like disguised princes

and princesses drinking champagne, and I really don't know whether they are real mortals, all these shadows, or the projected "astral" bodies of sleepers outside who hallucinate those drunk with sleep who sit there. The remarkable thing is that no coarseness prevails in the company packed together in the narrow café. The songs are mostly sentimental, and the melancholy guitars heal the needle-pricks with which the sharp steel-strung mandoline pricks the brain.

Now in the night, after my long course of loneliness, I feel happy in the crowd, which seems to radiate warmth and sympathy. For the first time after a long interval I am seized with a sentimental pity for the unhappy women of the night. Near our table sit half a dozen of them looking depressed, and not having ordered anything. They are most of them ugly, despised, and probably unable to order anything. I suggest to my friend, who is as disinterested as myself, to invite two of the ugliest who sit near us. He agrees; and I invite two, asking if they will have anything to drink, adding at the



same time that they must have no other designs and behave with propriety.

They seem to understand the part they have to play, and ask first for food. My friend and I continue our philosophical conversation in German, now and then speaking a word to the women, who are not presuming, and who seem more anxious to eat than to be attended to.

For a moment the thought strikes me, "Suppose one of your acquaintances saw you now?" Yes, I know what he would say, and I know what I would answer: "You have thrust me out of society, condemned me to solitude, and I am compelled to purchase the companionship of pariahs, outcasts like myself, and hungry as I have been. My simple pleasure is to be able to see these despised ones plume themselves on a conquest which is no conquest, to see them eat and drink, and to hear their voices, which are at any rate those of women. Moreover, I have not paid them in any way, not even in order to append a moral exhortation."

I simply find a pleasure in sitting together with human beings, and in being able to give out of my momentary superfluity, for in a month I may be as poor as they are.

It is now morning; the clock strikes five, and we go. But my companion demands fifteen francs for having given me her society, a demand which from her point of view I find quite comprehensible, for my society is as worthless as my power to protect her against the police. But I do not believe that will increase my self-respect, rather the opposite.

Meanwhile I go home with a good conscience after a well-spent night, sleep till ten o'clock, awake well rested, and spend the day in work and meditation. But the following night I have an attack of the terrible kind which Swedenborg describes in his *Dreams*. So that was the punishment! What for? I really don't understand. I thought that this was a new lesson in the art of life,—that I should learn that all men alike are good cabbage-eaters, and had actually for a moment imagined that the part I had

played in the night-café was rather that of a philanthropist than of a sinner, or at any rate morally indifferent. During the following days I was much depressed, and one evening I looked forward to passing a night of terror. At nine o'clock I had Cicero's *Natura Deorum* before me, and was so pleased with Aristotle's doctrine that the gods quite ignored our world, and would pollute themselves if they had anything to do with this filth, that I determined to copy it out. At the same time I noticed that blood had broken out on the back of my right hand without any apparent cause. When I wiped it off, I found no mark of a scratch. But I forgot it, and went to bed. About half-past twelve I awoke with the fully developed symptoms of what I have called "the electric girdle." Notwithstanding that I know its nature and inner significance, I am compelled to seek the cause of it outside myself. I made an effort and lighted the lamp. As the Bible lay close by I determined to consult it, and it gave the answer: "I will instruct thee

and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go; I will guide thee with Mine eye: be not like to horse and mule, whose mouths must be drawn with bit and bridle, else they will not come near thee."

That was an answer, and I went to sleep again, satisfied that it was not anything evil, but a benignant power that spoke to me, though somewhat ambiguously.

After I had quieted myself with some days' solitude, I went out again one evening with the American and a young Frenchman who corrects my manuscripts. It was somewhat tedious, and I returned home shortly before midnight with a bad conscience, because, being drawn into a heated conversation, I had been compelled to speak evil of some one absent. What I said was in self-defence against a liar, and absolutely true. About two o'clock I awoke and heard some one stamping in the room above me, and then come down the stairs and go into the room by the side of mine. Am I then watched? I had already had the same experience here in the hotel in September, when I lived on the third storey.

So it cannot be an accident. If now, as is probable, my unseen mentor wishes to punish me, how cunning it is to keep me uncertain whether they are human beings who persecute me or not! Though I have convinced myself that no one persecutes me, I am again drawn into the old circle of the self-torturing belief that some one does. When once the question is raised, there begins a dance of conjectures kept up by my conscience, which accuses me even when I have acted in pure self-defence in rebutting unjust accusations. I feel as though I were tied backwards to a stake, and that all the passers-by have the right to spit on me unpunished, but if I spit back, I am scourged, choked, hunted by furies. The whole world, even the meanest beggar, has rights against me. If I only knew why! All the tactics are so feminine that I cannot get rid of my suspicion. For when a woman for years has done injury and wrong to a man, and he, out of innate nobility, has not lifted his hand in return, but at last strikes round him as when one drives away a fly, the woman raises an outcry, calls the police, and exclaims,

"He defends himself!" Or, when in school an unreasonable teacher falls on a pupil, who is groundlessly accused, and the latter, from an injured sense of justice, seeks to defend himself, what does the teacher do? He proceeds to corporal punishment, exclaiming, "So you answer back, do you?" I have answered back. And therefore I am punished. The punishment continues eight days and nights successively. The consequence is that I become depressed and unfit for social intercourse. My friend the American, weary of me, quietly withdraws, and as he has set up a domestic establishment, I find myself again alone. But it is not entirely a mutual aversion which has a second time separated us, for we have both noticed that during our last meeting strange things have happened, which could be only ascribed to the intervention of conscious powers who intended to arouse aversion between us. This man, who knows hardly anything of my past life, seems during our last interview to have had the purpose of wounding me on all my sore points, and it seemed as though he guessed

my most secret thoughts and intentions, which are yet only known to myself. As I remarked something of this sort to him, a light seemed to break upon him, "Is that not the Devil?" he broke out. "I thought there was something wrong, for the whole evening you could not open your mouth without wounding me to the quick, but I saw by your quiet face and friendly expression that you had nothing evil in your mind." We tried to defy the malefic influence. But for three days in succession my friend traversed the long road to me in vain. I was not there, nor did he find me where I usually dine.

Thus \loneliness closes round me again like a thick darkness. It is nearly Christmas-time, and the being without home and family oppresses me. The whole of life becomes distasteful, and I begin again, in consequence, to look after what is from above. I buy the *Imitation of Christ* and read it.

It is not the first time that this wonderful book has fallen into my hands, but this time it finds the ground prepared. Its purport is to die, while yet alive, to the world,—the

contemptible, wearisome, filthy world. The unknown author has the remarkable faculty of not preaching or reproaching, but he speaks in a friendly way, convincingly, logically, and invitingly. He regards our sorrows not as punishments but tests, and thereby arouses in us the ambition to endure. Now I have Jesus again, not Christ this time, and He steals softly in to me, as though He came in velvet sandals. And the Christmas displays in the Rue Bonaparte help towards the belief: there is the Christ-child in the manger, the Jesus-child with royal mantle and crown, the Child-redeemer on the Virgin's arm, the Child playing, lying, and on the cross. Yes, the Child! Him I can understand. The God who has so long heard the lamentations of men over the misery of mortal life that He finally resolved to descend, to let Himself be born and to live, in order to prove how hard it is to drag oneself about with a human life. *Him* I comprehend.

One Sunday morning I passed by the Church Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois. This



building has always exercised a strong influence on me, because it looks so familiar; the vestibules with their paintings have an inviting air, and the congregations are so small that one is not crushed or lost. As I pass in at the door, there are twilight and organ music, coloured pictures and wax candles. Whenever I enter a Catholic church I remain standing at the door and feel embarrassed, restless, and outside the pale. When the gigantic Swiss guard approaches with his halberd, my conscience feels uneasy, and I expect him to drive me out as a heretic. Here in Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois I feel a certain anxiety, for I remember that it was in this tower that the bell for some unknown reason began to sound at two o'clock in the night of St. Bartholomew. To-day my position as a Huguenot makes me more uncomfortable than usual, for two mornings ago I read in the *Osservatore Romano* congratulations sent by the Catholic priests to the persecutors of the Jews in Russia and Hungary, followed by a highly coloured comparison with the

great days of the St. Bartholomew massacre, the return of which the writer evidently wished for.

The organ, which was out of sight, plays ~~tones~~ which I have never heard before, but which seem to me like memories—memories of the times of my ancestors, or still further back. When I hear fine music, I always ask myself, “Where did the composer find it?” Not in nature and in life, for in music there are no models, as in the other arts. The only remaining conjecture is, to consider music as the recollection of a condition, which every man in his best moments longs for. And that very longing shows a vague consciousness of having lost something which one has formerly possessed.

There are six lighted candles on the altar. The priest, arrayed in white, red, and gold, says nothing, but his hand hovers with the graceful movements of a butterfly over a book. Behind him come two little children dressed in white, and bend their knees. The priest washes his hands, and proceeds to do something which I do not understand. Something

rare, beautiful, and wonderful is taking place there in the distance amid the gold ornaments, incense-smoke, and light. I understand nothing, but feel an easily explicable fear and reverence, and am convinced that I have gone through the same experience before.

This is succeeded by the feeling of shame of the outcast, the heathen, who has nothing to do here. And then the whole truth is apparent: a Protestant has no religion,—for Protestantism is free-thinking, revolt, separation, dogmatism, theology, heresy. And the Protestant is under the ban of excommunication. This is the curse which rests over us and makes us dissatisfied, melancholy, restless. At this hour I feel the curse, and I understand why the victor at Lützen was cut off, and why his own daughter contradicted him; why Protestant Germany was devastated, while Austria remained untouched. And what was won for us? The freedom to be cast out, the freedom to separate ourselves and to split off, in order to end finally without a creed.

The surging congregation moves out through the doors, and I remain alone, enduring, as it

seems to me, their looks of disapproval. It is dark at the door where I stand, but I see all those who pass out touch the holy water in the stoup and cross themselves, and as I stand directly in front of it, it seems as though they were crossing themselves in defence against me. I know what that means, as in Austria I was exposed to the danger of those who met me on the roads crossing themselves against the "Protestant."

At last, as I am left alone, I approach the consecrated font out of curiosity or some other motive. It is made out of yellow marble in the form of a conch-shell, and over it hangs a winged cherub's head. The face of the child has a lively and radiant expression such as one only sees in good, beautiful, and well-cared-for children. The mouth is open, and the corners of it show a suppressed smile. The large fine eyes are cast down, and one sees how the little rogue contemplates his image in the water, but under the protection of his eyelids, as though he were conscious of doing something wrong, but yet he is not afraid of his chastiser, whom he knows he can

disarm with a single look. That is the child, which still keeps the impress of our distant origin, a gleam of the supernatural, which belongs to heaven. So then it is possible to smile in heaven, and not only to bear the cross! How often in my self-reproachful hours, when everlasting punishments have seemed to me objective realities, have I not put to myself the question which many would consider irreverent, "Can God smile?"—smile at the folly and over-daring of human ants? If He can, then He can also forgive.

The cherub's face smiles at me and looks at me under its eyelids, and open mouth says banteringly, "Try it; the water is not dangerous." I touch the holy water with two fingers,—a ripple passes over the surface, as though it were the pool of Bethesda, and then I make a motion with my finger from my forehead to my heart and across from left to right, as I have seen my daughter do. But in the next moment I am outside the Church, for the cherub laughed, and I—I will not say I was ashamed, but I had rather no one had seen it.

Outside, on the church door, there is a notice

about something, which informs me that it is Advent. In front of the church an old woman sits in the terrible cold and sleeps. I lay gently a silver coin in her lap without her noticing it, and although I would have gladly seen her awaking, I go my way. What a noble and real joy to be able to act as the agent of Providence in hearing a request and to give for once, after having so long received.

\* \* \* \*

Now I read the *Imitation* and Chateaubriand's *La Genie du Christianisme*. I have taken the sign of the cross and carry a medal which I have received at the Church of the Sacred Heart in Montmartre. But the cross is for me the symbol of sufferings patiently borne, and not the token that Christ has suffered in my stead, for I must do that for myself. I have, in fact, framed a theory, as follows: When we unbelievers did not want to hear any more about Christ, He left us to ourselves, His vicarious satisfaction for sin ceased, and we must drag ourselves along with our own misery and consciousness of guilt. Swedenborg says expressly that

Christ's suffering on the cross was not His work of atonement, but a test which God laid upon Himself rather of shame than of suffering.

At the same time as the *Imitatio Christi*, I get Swedenborg's *Vera Religio Christiana* in two thick volumes. With an attractive power that defies all resistance he drags me into his gigantic mill and begins to grind me. At first I lay the book aside and say, "This is not for me." But I take it up again, for there is so much in it that chimes in with my observations and experiences, and so much worldly wisdom that interests me. Again I cast it aside, but have no peace till I take it up again; and the terrible thing about the matter is that when I read, I have the distinct impression "This is the truth, but I cannot reach it." Never! for I will not. Then I begin to revolt, and say to myself, "He has deceived himself, and this is the spirit of falsehood." But then comes the fear that I have made a mistake.

What is it after all in the book, which is to be a word of life to me? I find the whole

arrangement of grace and eternal hell; childish recollections of the hell of childhood with its everlasting miseries. But now I have got my head in the noose, and am held fast. The whole day and half the night my thoughts revolve round this one theme,—I am damned, for I cannot speak the word “Jesus” without adding “Christ,” and according to Swedenborg, this is the shibboleth of evil spirits.

Now a whole abyss opens within me, and the gentle Christ of the *Imitation* has become the Tormentor. I am keenly conscious that if this process continues I shall become a “Reader,” but that I will not.

Three days have passed since I have put Swedenborg away again, but one evening, as I am studying the physiology of plants, I remember to have seen something especially interesting regarding the position of plants in the *Vera Religio Christiana*. Cautiously I begin to look for the well-known passage, but cannot find it; on the other hand, I find everything else, “the call, the enlightenment, sanctification, conversion,” and,



as I turn the page and try to hurry on, my eye is arrested by the most terrible passages which stab and burn. I hunt through both volumes twice, but what I seek has disappeared. It is an enchanted book, and I should like to burn it, but dare not, for night is approaching and two o'clock will come.

I feel myself becoming a hypocrite, and I have resolved to-morrow, if I can only sleep this night in peace, to commence a battle against this soul-destroyer.

I will survey his weaknesses with a microscope. I will pluck his stings out of my heart, even though it should be torn in the process, and I will forget that he has saved me from one madhouse in order to conduct me into another.

\* \* \* \*

After I had slept in the night, although I had expected to be tormented, I set to work the following morning, not without scruples, for to take up weapons against a friend is the saddest of all enterprises. But it must be; it concerns my immortal soul, whether it is to be destroyed or not. ..

So long as Swedenborg in the *Arcana* and the *Apocalypse* treats of revelations, prophecies, interpretations, he has a religious effect upon me, but when in the *Vera Religio* he begins to reason about dogmas, he becomes a freethinker and Protestant. When he draws the sword of reason, he has himself chosen the weapons, and they are likely to prove bad ones for himself. I wish to have religion as a quiet accompaniment to the monotonous music of life, but here it is a matter of professional religion and pulpit-discussion—in brief, a struggle for power.

Already, while I read the *Apocalypse*, I came across a passage which repelled me, by betraying a human vanity, which I do not like to see in a man of God. But out of respect I passed it by, not, however, without erasing it. The passage is as follows: In heaven Swedenborg meets an English king, to whom he complains that English newspapers have not thought it worth while to notice certain of his writings. He also expresses his vexation against certain bishops and lords, who had received his writings but

given them no attention. The king (George II.) is astonished, and turns to the unworthy recipients, saying, "Go your ways! Woe betide him who can remain so indifferent when he hears of heaven and eternal life."

I may remark in passing that I do not like the way in which both Dante and Swedenborg send their enemies and friends to hell, while they themselves scale the heights; and I praise myself a little like Paul, were it the proper time to remember the fact that I, in contrast to the great masters, have placed myself alone in the furnaces of hell,\* and have at any rate set the rest above me in Purgatory.

In the *Vera Religio* the matter is still more uncomfortable, for there one finds Calvin in a brothel, because he has taught that faith is everything and works nothing, as in the case of the crucified thief. Luther and Melancthon, in spite of their Protestantism, are exposed to coarse scorn and mockery. But no! it disturbs me to seek

\*One of Strindberg's autobiographical works is called *Inferno*.

out these flaws in the picture of a noble mind. And I hope it has fared with Swedenborg in his spiritual experience as he says it fared with Luther: "When he entered the spirit world he made strenuous efforts to propagate his dogmas, but as these were not rooted in the innermost depth of his mind, but only imbibed from his infancy, he soon obtained greater illumination, so that he finally shared the new heavenly faith."

Is my Teacher angry that I have written this? I cannot believe it: perhaps he shares my opinions now, and has come to find that there are no theological disputes over there. His description of life in the spiritual world, with pulpits and hearers, objectors and answerers, has prompted in me the irreverent question, "Is God a theologian?"

I had now locked away Swedenborg and taken leave of him with gratitude, as of one who, although with alarming pictures, had frightened me like a child back to God. And now the White Christ, the Child who

can smile and play, approaches with the Advent season. At the same time I can view life with more happiness and confidence, that is, as long as I keep watch over my acts, words, and even thoughts, which it seems cannot be kept secret from the Guardian and Avenging Angel who follows me everywhere.

Enigmatic occurrences continue to happen, but not in such a threatening way as before. I have abandoned Swedenborg's Christianity because it was ugly, revengeful, petty, slavish, but I keep to the *Imitation* with certain reservations, and a quiet religion of compromise has sprung out of that ominous condition which accompanies the search for Jesus.

One evening I sit at dinner with a young French poet, who has just read my *Inferno*, and from the occultist point of view wishes to find an explanation for the assaults to which I have been exposed and have endured.

"Have you no talisman against them?" he asked. "You must have a talisman."

“Yes, I have the *Imitation*,” I answered. He looked at me, and I, somewhat embarrassed because I had just deserted from the ranks of the freethinkers, took out my watch, in order to have something to occupy myself with. At the same moment the medal of the Sacred Heart with the picture of Christ fell from my watchchain. I felt still more embarrassed, but said nothing.

We soon got up, and went to a café to drink a glass of beer. The hall was large, and when we entered we took our places at a table exactly opposite the door. There we sat for a time, and the conversation turned on Christ and what He signifies.

“He has certainly not suffered for us,” I said; “for, if He had, our sufferings would have been diminished. They have not been lessened, however, but are as severe as ever.”

Just then a waiter made an exclamation, and with a broom and sawdust began to sweep the ground between us and the door, though no one had come in since we had entered. On the white inlaid floor there

was a circle of red drops, and as the waiter turned away he looked at us askance as if we were guilty. I asked my companion what it was.

“It is something red.”

“Then we have done it, for no one has stepped there after us, and when we entered the floor was clean.”

“No,” answered my friend, “we have not done it, for the mark is not that of a foot, but as if some one had bled; and we are not bleeding.”

This was weird and also uncomfortable, because we were attracting the attention of the other occupants of the café in an embarrassing way.

The poet read my thoughts, though he had not seen what had happened with the medal. Therefore, in order to relieve my mind, I said finally, “Christ persecutes me.” He made no answer, although he would have gladly found a natural explanation of the occurrence, but could not.

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Before I leave my friend the American,

whom I have provisionally identified with the doctor, Francis Schlatter, I must relate some incidents which increase the suspicion that this man had a "double."

When we recently renewed our acquaintanceship, I told him exactly all my opinions on the subject, and showed him the number of the *Revue Spirite* in which was the article "My friend H." He appeared undecided, but inclined to be sceptical.

After some days, when he came to dinner, he was quite disturbed, and related, with a good deal of emotion, that his mistress had disappeared without leaving any information, and without bidding him farewell. She remained some days absent and then returned. On being questioned, she acknowledged that she was afraid of her master, for whom she acted as housekeeper. Further questioning elicited the fact that once when she awoke in the night, and he was asleep, his face appeared as white as chalk and irrerecognisable, and this frightened her indescribably.

Moreover, he said, he did not dare to go to sleep before midnight, for if he did he was



tortured as though he were stuck on a roasting skewer which turned him slowly round, so that he had to leave his bed.

When he had read my book, *Inferno*, he said—

“You have not had a persecution mania, but have been persecuted, though not by men.”

Stimulated by my related experiences, he began to search in his memory, and imparted to me some inexplicable incidents of his life during the last few years. For instance, there was a certain spot on the Pont Saint-Michel where a rheumatic pain in his leg always obliged him to stand. This occurred regularly, and he had caused his friends to witness it. He had also noticed many other strange incidents, and had learnt to say “punished.”

“If I smoke, I am punished; and if I drink absinthe, I am punished.”

One evening when we had met, but it was not yet midnight, we entered the Café de la Fregata in the Rue du Bac. Talking energetically, we took the first place that

offered, and asked for absinthe. The conversation continued, but all of a sudden my companion stopped and, looking round him, broke out, "Have you ever seen such a collection of bandits? They are all criminal types."

When I looked round I was startled, for there were not the usual occupants of the café, but a collection of ruffians, most of whom seemed disguised and made grimaces. My companion had leant himself against an iron pillar which looked as though it grew out of his back: "And you are in the pillory!" I exclaimed.

It seemed to us that they were all watching us; we became morose, depressed, and stood up, without finishing our drink.

That was the last time that I drank absinthe with my friend. I made another attempt to drink it alone, but I did not repeat it. Waiting for some friends to come to dinner I took a seat on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, exactly opposite Cluny, and ordered a glass of absinthe. Immediately three figures came forward, I know not from

where, and stood before me. Two fellows with torn clothes, spattered with dirt, as if they had been dragged out of sewers; beside them a woman, bareheaded, with unkempt hair and traces of beauty, drunken, dirty; they all looked at me scornfully and boldly, with a cynical air as though they knew me and expected to be invited to my table. I have never seen such types in Paris or Berlin, though I may have done so near London Bridge, where the people really have a weird appearance. I try to tire them out by lighting cigarettes, but in vain. Then the thought strikes me, "These are not real people at all, but half-visions." I stand up, and since then I have not ventured to touch absinthe.

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Amid all my vacillations one thing seems certain to me, and that is that an invisible hand has undertaken my education, for it is not the logic of circumstances which is operating here. It is not, for instance, a natural result that a chimney should take fire, or that figures previously non-existent

should appear when I drink absinthe. Nor is it natural that I should be taken out of bed at night if I have spoken evil about any one in the day. But in all these dealings there is revealed a conscious, planning, all-knowing intelligence with a good purpose. It is, however, difficult for me to obey it, for my experience of so-called kindness and disinterestedness have been unfortunate. Meanwhile it has fashioned a regular system of signalling, which I begin to understand, and whose correctness I have proved.

Thus, for six weeks I had made no chemical experiments, and there had been no smoke in the room. One morning I took out my apparatus for producing gold and prepared the chemical baths. Immediately the room filled with smoke; it rose from the ground, from behind the mantelpiece mirror, everywhere. When I summoned the landlord, he declared it was incomprehensible, because it was coal smoke, and coals were not used in the house at all! This meant that I was not to make experiments in alchemy.

The wooden concertina, mentioned above, betokens peace, for I have noticed when it is absent there is always trouble. A whimpering child's voice, which is often heard in the chimney and cannot be accounted for on material grounds, signifies "You must be industrious," and, in addition, "You must write this book and not occupy yourself with another."

If I am rebellious in thoughts, words, or writing, or approach improper subjects, I hear a deep base note as though it came from an organ or the trunk of an elephant when he trumpets and is angry.

I mention two proofs which show that these are not mere subjective impressions on my part. The American, the French poet, and I, were dining at the "Place de la Bastille." The conversation for a couple of hours had turned upon art and literature, when, during dessert, the American proceeded to tell some stories of bachelor life. Immediately there was heard in the wall the trumpeting of an elephant. I made as though I heard nothing, but my

companions noticed it, and changed the topic of their talk with a certain vexation. Another time I was breakfasting with a Swede in quite another café. Towards the end of the dessert he talked about Huysman's *La Bas* and was proceeding to describe the Black Mass. Immediately there was the sound of a trumpet, but this time in the middle of the hall, which was empty.

"What was that?" he asked, breaking off.

I did not answer, and he continued the terrible description. Again there was the sound of a trumpet, so powerful this time that the narrator stopped short, first poured out a wineglass, upset the whole of the creamjug over his clothes, and quitted the the topic which annoyed me.

## NOTE

AS the reader has probably perceived, the second part of this book, called "Wrestling Jacob," is an attempt to give a symbolical description of the religious struggles of the author, and as such it is a failure. Therefore it has only remained a fragment, and, like all religious crises, has ended in a chaos. The inference seems to be that all investigation of the secrets of Providence, like all attempts to take heaven by storm, are struck with confusion, and that every attempt to approach religion by the way of argument leads to absurdities. The reason is that religion like science begins with axioms, whose peculiarity is that they do not need to be proved, and *cannot* be proved, so that when we try to prove self-evident necessary pre-suppositions we fall into absurdities.

When the author, in 1894, gave up his

scepticism, which threatened to make havoc of the whole of his intellectual life, and began to place himself experimentally at the standpoint of a believer, there opened to him a new spiritual life, which is described in the *Inferno* and in these *Legends*. As time went on, and the author had given up all resistance, he found himself attacked by influences and powers which threatened to destroy him. Feeling himself sinking, he clutched at lighter objects which might keep him afloat; but these also began to give way, and it was only a question of time when he would perish. At such moments the terror of the drowning man takes a straw for a support, and then the faith, to which he is compelled, lifts him out of the waves in which he is sinking, so that he can walk upon the water. *Credo quia absurdum*. I believe, because the absurdity which reasoning leads to, shows me that I was trying to prove an axiom. And thus we are linked to what is above us. ' 3



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